

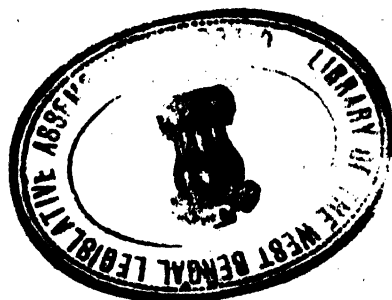






# **MYSTERY OF DEATH**

**A STUDY IN THE PHILOSOPHY AND RELIGION  
OF THE KATHA UPANISHAD.**





**BY THE SAME AUTHOR**

**LIFE BEYOND DEATH**

**SCIENCE OF PSYCHIC PHENOMENA**

**OUR RELATION TO THE ABSOLUTE**

**ATTITUDE OF VEDANTA TOWARDS RELIGION**

**INDIA AND HER PEOPLE**

**PATH OF REALIZATION**

**DIVINE HERITAGE OF MAN**

**SELF-KNOWLEDGE**

**SPIRITUAL UNFOLDMENT**

**HUMAN AFFECTION AND DIVINE LOVE**

**REINCARNATION**

**DOCTRINE OF KARMA**

**MEMOIRS OF RAMAKRISHNA**

**SAYINGS OF RAMAKRISHNA, ETC.**



*Abhedananda Memorial Series No. 5.*

# **MYSTERY OF DEATH**

**A STUDY IN THE PHILOSOPHY AND RELIGION  
OF THE KATHA UPANISHAD.**

*by*

**SWAMI ABHEDANANDA**



**RAMAKRISHNA VEDANTA MATH**

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## PREFACE

“Mystery of Death” is the unveiling of the central philosophical and religious ideas and thoughts that are contained in the sacred dialogue between Yama, the Ruler of Death, and Nachiketâ, the seeker of the highest truth. The discourses recorded in this book were delivered serially as lectures before the learned audiences of America in 1906.

The Katha Upanishad belongs to the Krishna-Yajurveda, i.e., the Upanishad or rationalistic portion of the Yajurveda. This Upanishad contains two main chapters (*adhyâya*), three dialogues in the first chapter with 72 slokas and three in the second containing 48 slokas. The Upanishads are recognized as the revelation of eternal truth which were revealed in the purified hearts of the Seers or Rishis. The Seers of India saw the transcendental truth in their ecstatic vision. They preserved the Vedic and Upanishadic texts orally transmitting them from generation to generation. The Upanishad teaches the truth which is universal and eternal. This truth is one without a second, but it expresses itself through the vehicles of words and scripts in manifold ways and forms. The ancient holy scriptures of India say that the Brahman became ‘many’ to realize its own glory and greatness. The manyness is its assuming aspect whereas the oneness is its real status. Ordinary men make themselves toys in the hand of nescience. They play their games in the world of contingencies and delusions and gain no consequence worth having. They create an eternal cycle of births and deaths, which entails a limitless chain of ascends and descends from which there is no escape. The

teachings of Upanishad show the path of escape from this cycle of recurring births and rebirths and enlighten us as to the mode of realizing the changing nature of the world, awakening at the same time our self-revealing pure consciousness latent in us.

Now, what do we mean by the word *Upanishad*? The learned Swâmi has thrown sufficient light upon this term and says that "the Upanishad is that which destroys ignorance and superstition of individual soul" or "that which guides the individual soul towards the attainment of the highest wisdom and perfection" or "that which slackens our attachment to our material bodies and to earthly conditions and to the material world". Sankara and other commentators also interpret the word Upanishad in these three ways. In truth, Upanishad is not a particular book written by someone about something, but, as the Swâmi says, it is the "collected wisdom which is eternal and uncreated by human agency. \* \* It emanates from God; it is God; it is the highest ideal of our life".

Sankara explains the Upanishad as the *moksha-shâstra* or *Brahma-vidyâ*, because it reveals the immediate knowledge (*vidyâ*) of the Brahman. Sankara says that those who are sincere seekers of the highest truth, those who have purified their hearts not by rubbing out or suppressing the manifold desires but by transforming them into pure consciousness, they really cut asunder all doubts and knots of the cycle of births and deaths, and attain God-realization. He mentions in his commentary:

सदेर्षांतोर्विशरद्भगवत्पसादनार्थस्य उपनिषदस्य विविक्प्रत्ययान्तस्य रूप-  
मिदम् 'उपनिषद्' इति। उपनिषच्छब्देन च व्याचिरुद्यासित-ग्रन्थ-  
प्रतिपाद्यवेद्य-वस्तुविषया विद्योच्यते। केन पुनरुच्ययोगेन उपनिषच्छब्देन

विद्योऽयम् इति ? उच्यते, ये मुमुक्षवो दुष्टानुशङ्कविषयवितुष्याः सन्तः उपनिषद्ब्रह्मवाक्यां ब्रह्माख्यलक्षणं विद्यामुपसद्योपगम्य तन्निष्ठतया निश्चयेन शीलयन्ति, तेषामविद्यादेः संसारबीजस्य विहरणाद्विमुक्त्याद् विनाशात् इत्यनेनार्थयोगेन विद्योपनिषद्वितुष्यते । \* \* इति ब्रह्म-गमयितृत्वेन योगाद्ब्रह्मविद्या उपनिषत् ।

The subject-matter (*vishaya*) of the Upanishad is the *Para-brahman*, the highest truth. Its utility (*prayojana*) lies in the utter extinction of the fire of the wordly desires and simultaneous attainment of the knowledge supramental. The connection (*samvandha*) between a seeker and the Upanishad is also well-established by its supreme divine goal:

विषयश्च विशिष्ट उक्तो विद्यायाः परं ब्रह्म प्रत्यगात्ममूतम् ।  
प्रयोजनञ्चास्या उपनिषद् आत्यन्तिकी संसारनिवृत्तिर्ब्रह्मप्राप्तिलक्षणा ।  
सम्बन्धश्चैवम्भूतप्रयोजनेनोक्तः । अतो यथोक्ताधिकारि-विषय-प्रयोजन-  
सम्बन्धाया विद्यायाः करतलन्यस्तामलकवत् प्रकाशकत्वेन विशिष्टाधिकारि-  
विषय-प्रयोजन-सम्बन्धा एता बहुषो भवन्तीति ।

Again the Katha Upanishad belongs to the branches (*shâkhâ*) of the Vedic Katha community. The Vedas are four in number: Rik, Sâma, Yaju and Atharva, but they were divided into many recensions according to different Vedic branches (*shâkhâs*) connected with different clans. Though the real aim and object of the various clans and communities were to perform the religious rites and sacrifices (*yajña*) yet their mantras, their offerings of oblations and their performances differ from one another, because each clan and community adopted different meters, mantras, texts and injunctions of the Vedas suitable to themselves. Different grammars were composed for different Vedic branches and they were known as the *Shiksâs* and *Prâtishâkhyas*. The portion of the

Vedas that describes and teaches the rituals and ceremonies is called the *Karmakânda* and that which teaches renunciation, discriminating knowledge and the nature of the highest truth is called the *Jñanakânda*. The Upanishads are the rationalistic and spiritualistic sides of the Vedas, and each Veda and upa-Veda contain different Upanishads.

The Upanishads form the foundation of the Vedânta philosophy. Sadânanda Yatî says that the name 'Upanishad' signifies 'Vedânta'—"*Vedânto-nâmopanishad-pramânam*", and the *Sutras* by Vyâsa and the *Shârîka-bhâsya* by Sankara are helpful to the study of the Upanishads—"*tadupakârinî shârîraka-sutrâdinî cha*". The Swâmi also says that in the Upanishads you will find the germs of the beautiful philosophy of Vedânta. The Upanishads are like the grapes and the Vedânta philosophy is like the essence squeezed out of those grapes. The Vedânta philosophy is based upon these Upanishads, but it is systematized. The Upanishads or the universal truths that were revealed in the ecstatic vision of the Vedic Rishis were absolutely simple and naked, and when they were rationalized with logic and argumentations they were known as the *Vedânta-darshana*.

The Katha Upanishad expounds the mystery of the afterworld, and elucidates the worldly and other-worldly pleasures, the law of Karma, the destiny of man and living animals, the Providence, the absolute faith in truth, renunciation, love of knowledge and perfect freedom. This Upanishad begins with an instructive story, which though it may not be historical yet signifies that each man possesses some doubt and faith, each man hankers after the highest knowledge and happiness, and so it is inevitable that all men would ask for something



higher—something better. Nachiketâ personifies the universal questioner and the unique answerer is the Ruler of Death himself. Nachiketâ and Yama may be compared to the doubting mind and the discriminating intelligence (*viveka*) of the individual as Arjuna and Sri Krishna have often been interpreted in the holy *Gîtâ*. Really all seekers of truth are possessed of constructive doubts and so they argue like a theist to get the solution of their problems and a genuine proof of the unchanging truth. Nachiketâ may therefore be taken as a symbol of the real inquisitive seeker of truth. He was strictly cross-examined by the self-realized master Yama as regards the real cravings of his heart and whether or not he was actually hankering after phenomenal riches and happiness. He was tempted by the master a thousand times with offerings of all kinds of pleasure and prosperity, but he was not moved and eventually he succeeded in extracting his long-cherished gift of boons which meant the eternal peace of his soul viz. God-realization. He drank the nectar of immortality and got absolute escape from worldly fetters and thus set a bright example before the seekers of knowledge and truth.

The beautiful story of Nachiketâ further teaches us that whosoever becomes a sincere soul, whosoever renounces everything for the sake of the highest truth, is sure to get fruitful consequence, his life's mystery solved once for all and he becomes the living God on this earth.

Swâmi Abhedânanda was the direct disciple of Bhagavân Râmakrishna. He sat at the holy feet of his wonderful Master (*âscharya vyaktâ*) and got the key to unlock the treasures of immortality and celestial bliss. He was a man of realization and his writings and lectures were saturated with

an unearthly atmosphere of the transcendental spirit. He was a practical man of dynamic personality, and so whatever he spoke or wrote, he did it with an emphasis upon the practical value and utility in everyone's daily run of life. And so his philosophy permeates as it transcends the human life and the world. In the concluding lines of his book he says that whosoever "will follow the path of Nachiketâ will attain to the same goal. Whosoever will realize the Absolute as eternal within his heart will become immortal in the end and will transcend the realm of death". The author instructs all seekers of truth through the story of Yama and Nachiketâ to go beyond the changing phase of death and to get the flash of the transcendental luminosity. He never tells anyone to remain a lifeless stone, inert and inactive, after getting the divine illumination, but advises them as dynamic centres of inspiration and driving force to help mankind selflessly in their onward march to the ultimate goal. We see that Nachiketâ returned to a human society of discrepancies and contingencies, but he returned as a realized soul, as a God-man, and lived the life of the perfect Ideal that became the guiding star to the path of progress, perfect freedom, peace and everlasting happiness.

We have critically edited the lectures and added some notes to elucidate the discussions of the Swâmi and a detailed table of contents. We have also given the Sanskrit texts and some of the portions of Sankara's commentaries and Anandagiri's glossaries in the footnotes where necessary. A chronology of the lectures delivered has been added as a historical record. We offer our hearty thanks to Swâmi Vedânanda, Prof. Haridas Mukherjee, M.A., Sree Dharendra Nath Roy, Bar-at-law for

helping us in editing the manuscript and to Sree Upendra Kumar Dutta and Sree Mirâ Mitra for correcting the proofs. We hope that this volume will be of substantial help to the seekers of knowledge.

PRAJNANANANDA.

RAMAKRISHNA VEDANTA MATH  
19B, Raja Rajkrishna Street,  
Calcutta.

# CHRONOLOGY OF THE LECTURES ON THE KATHA UPANISHAD DELIVERED BY THE AUTHOR.

## CHAPTER I. On January 2nd, 1906

"	II.	"	"	9th	"
"	III.	"	"	16th	"
"	IV.	"	"	23rd	"
"	V.	"	"	30th	"
"	VI.	"	February	6th	"
"	VII.	"	"	13th	"
"	VIII.	"	"	20th	"
"	IX.	"	"	27th	"
"	X.	"	March	6th	"
"	XI.	"	"	13th	"
"	XII.	"	"	20th	"
"	XIII.	"	"	27th	"
"	XIV.	"	April	3rd	"
"	XV.	"	"	10th	"
"	XVI.	"	"	17th	"
"	XVII.	"	"	24th	"
"	XVIII.	"	May	1st	"
"	XIX.	"	"	8th	"

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# MYSTERY OF DEATH

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The most ancient writings on the Vedânta philosophy are the *Upanishads* which form the knowledge portion of the Vedas, the holy scriptures of the Hindus. These Vedas are the oldest scriptures in the world, older than the Old Testament, older than the Zend Avesta, and other scriptures of the world.

The word "Veda" is derived from the Sanskrit root, *Vid* 'to know', and means knowledge or wisdom. And the literal meaning of the term *Veda* is the collective wisdom of the ancient Seers of Truth who lived in India during prehistoric times. The wisdom of those hoary sages was spoken out in Sanskrit, the language of the gods, and it was handed down through generations by memory.

Long before the art of writing was known to the world these revealed truths existed under the title of the *Veda*, and afterwards when the art of writing was discovered, they were written down and arranged into books. There are many volumes of these Vedas which can be divided into two grand parts. The one may be called the ritualistic portion or *Karma-kânda* and the other the knowledge portion or the *Jñâna-kânda*.

The ritualistic portion of the Vedas describes the various rites and ceremonies which are necessary for the attainment of earthly pleasure and celestial happiness. The main object of the Vedic rituals was to direct the human souls to the highest felicity of heaven.

Long before any other nation had any conception of heaven, these great Vedic Seers of Truth had realized that there were such realms as heavens which they described in glowing terms. According to the conception of the Vedic Seers there are many heavens which afford different kinds of celestial pleasure. For instance, there is the realm of the *Pitris* or souls of the departed ancestors. In this heaven the departed souls meet their relatives and enjoy the fruits of their good thoughts and good deeds after death. Their stay in the *Pitriloka* or the heaven of the ancestors continues for an indefinite period of time. The realm of the *Devas*, or bright spirits or angels is another heaven and so on. The modern spiritualistic ideal of meeting friends and enjoying with them all the pleasures of heaven, is not a new one. It had originated in India long before other nations discovered it. So it is an old belief, and there is some truth in it, because these heavens are nothing but the realms which we enter according to our own thoughts and desires. Into these realms we go to have our desires fulfilled. If we have a special desire for a certain kind of pleasure on this earth, we may get it, but we may not be satisfied. That unsatisfied desire

clings to us even after death and we continue to desire the same thing and crave the same kind of pleasure even after death. That desire will take us wherever it can be fulfilled. If that desire be of a very earthly nature, gross, material, or sensuous, it will force the soul to come back on this earth. Otherwise, if the desire be of a refined character the soul will have to go to such realms as are mentioned in the Vedas.

All these heavens are meant for those who have lived a virtuous and righteous life on this earth. But, in those ancient times the Seers did not believe in an eternal hell. The idea of a hell or of eternal punishment did not strike their minds. On the contrary, they believed in the law of cause and sequence. Even in the earliest scriptures we find the belief in this law of cause and sequence, that is, the *law of Karma*. The law is that those who have lived wicked and unrighteous lives will come back to expiate their wicked deeds on this plane, and be born again and again until they have learnt the law through hard experiences and are ready for higher life and gradual perfection. So, in the ritualistic portion of the Vedas various sacrifices, rites, ceremonies and works, which lead to heavens, are described. Philanthropic works or works done through unselfishness or disinterested love and the results they bring to the souls after death are graphically described in the *Karma-kânda* or ritualistic portion of the Vedas.

The difference between the enjoyment in a heaven

and that on this earth is only a difference of degree, and not of kind. In our earthly experience we find that pleasure is always attended with some kind of pain and suffering. If we do not have the feeling of pain or suffering we cannot enjoy pleasure. Pleasure would be no pleasure if it continued for ever. That is a thing which very few people understand. All our knowledge or happiness depends upon comparison. If we have no opposite experience, we cannot enjoy. And it is for this reason that in the description of the Christian heaven you will find that there is a thin transparent wall between the place of enjoyment and the place of punishment so that those who go to heaven could see the miserable condition and suffering of the sinners, and thus by comparison could relish their own felicity or enjoyment. This is, of course, a very crude way of expressing the same truth that all enjoyment or pleasure depends upon comparison. However, the real truth is that every kind of pleasure is related to the feeling of some kind of pain. But the duration of pleasure and happiness in this earth is very limited, while the duration of pain is greater than that of pleasure or happiness. It may be just the opposite in heaven. In heaven the duration of pleasure or happiness would be longer than that of pain or suffering, but even in heaven there is some kind of suffering in some form or other. If there be no immediate suffering, there is a fear of losing pleasure, and that fear is often so strong with the inmates of heavenly regions that it makes them



unhappy. There are stories where these *Devas* or Angels are made unhappy simply because some mortal on this plane is becoming extremely virtuous, and they are afraid of losing their higher position and of being deprived of their powers, fearing that these mortals would take possession of their powers and their pleasures. Such stories are to be found in the Hindu scriptures.

However, it is a fact that we cannot enjoy one pleasure throughout eternity, and even if we could, we would not be happy because there would be no occasion for comparison and that would make us feel monotonous. For instance, if we sing the praise of the Lord as it is the occupation in the Christian heaven all our life and do not have any other variety we would not enjoy that long. Playing long and long on a particular harp would not make us happy, and that is the reason why there are so many different kinds of celestial realms described in the Vedas, so that there would be no monotony about the pleasure and that people would have more variety by going from one realm to another, and would enjoy perhaps greater degree of pleasure in one heaven than in another. All these things as well as the various sacrifices are described in the ritualistic portion of the Vedas.

The Hindus of the Vedic period used to have animal sacrifices as in the Old Testament we find the ancient Jews used to sacrifice animals to propitiate their Deity. But later on those bloody

sacrifices among the Hindus were stopped. The idea was at that time that they would not eat any animal food without offering it to their gods. They had tribal gods or personified spiritual forces who governed the various aspects of physical nature and whenever they sought help of those gods they used to offer them propitiatory sacrifices. But in course of time the Hindus outgrew such primitive conceptions and abandoned bloody sacrifices.

The rationalistic portion of the Vedas came into existence when these ancient Seers of Truth realized the conditions under which celestial pleasures could be enjoyed, and discovered that those pleasures were the results of good thoughts and good deeds which men perform during their earthly career. As all thoughts and works are limited by time and space, they could not produce a result unlimited by time and space. Following the rules of logical reasoning they understood that a finite cause must produce a finite result, and that an eternal effect is only possible when the cause is eternal and not otherwise. There is no work or thought which is unlimited by time and space, consequently its result, however great it may be, must be finite or limited by time and space. Celestial pleasure can neither be eternal nor unlimited by time and space. The word "eternal" is generally used in the sense of that which is beginningless and endless. When we say: "time is eternal," what we mean is that 'time is beginningless and endless'. If it had any beginning it would not be

eternal. Sometime, however, this term refers to an indefinite period of time.

If those celestial pleasures were eternal their causes must be eternal too. But the cause, as we have seen, are nothing but good thoughts and good deeds which can never be eternal because they are limited by time and space as well as by the individual capacity of the worker and thinker, and, therefore, as the causes are not eternal the results can never be eternal. So, the Vedic Seers of Truth could no longer believe that the heavenly pleasures or the heavens were eternal.

Another point which we should bear in mind is that these Vedic Seers were monotheistic in their ideas. At first they tried to explain the mystery of the universe and its creation by conceiving of a Creator who was omnipotent and omniscient Lord of all. They rejected the theory of creation of "something out of nothing" and used the word "Creator" in the sense of one who projects the universe out of the Cosmic Energy (*Prakriti*) which forms the body of the Lord, and manufactures through the process of evolution the various objects of nature in accordance with the types of previous cycles. Thus, explanation of the origin of the external world depended upon the conception of God as the projector or starter of evolution. Then they enquired into the nature of the individual soul, the internal or subjective world, and its relation to the external or objective world. They gradually arrived at the conclusion that the sub-

jective world is connected with the objective world by the individual soul or ego, which is beyond matter. They also discovered through their experiences in the superconscious state and through revelation that the individual soul is eternal. It is beginningless and endless and its relation to the Universal Being, or Creator, is a spiritual one like absolute oneness on the spiritual plane, or in other words, the Creator manifests Himself in the form of an individual ego. This conclusion they expressed in Sanskrit, the most beautiful of all languages. All such expressions are embodied in the *Upanishads*, the rationalistic portion of the Vedas.

The *Upanishads* contain the expressions of revealed wisdom which explain the nature of the soul, and the best method by which that highest knowledge or Divine wisdom can be acquired. Gradually those ancient Seers gave up the ideal of going to heaven as the highest aim of life, and discovered that happiness which is more permanent and more everlasting than the celestial pleasures as we shall notice in course of our study on the *mystery of death* expounded in the *Katha Upanishad*.

These *Upanishads* form the foundation of the Vedânta philosophy. In these you will find the gems of the beautiful philosophy of Vedânta. The *Upanishads* are like the grapes and the Vedânta philosophy is like the essence squeezed out of those grapes. The Vedânta philosophy is based upon these *Upanishads*, but it is systematized. It shows

through logic and reason that perfect harmony exists among the various texts on different subjects described therein. In the *Upanishads* we find the gems of truth here and there, but it needed a master mind to collect these different jewels of spiritual science and gems of truth and string them together into a beautiful garland, like a beautiful necklace. This great task was done by the master mind of Vyâsadeva, the writer of the *Vedânta-sûtras*, or the aphorisms of the Vedânta philosophy.

There have been many commentators of these *Upanishads*. The earliest and best of these commentators was Bhagavân Sankarâchârya who was a great saint, a penetrating thinker, and perhaps the greatest philosopher that the world has ever seen. He lived about the eighth century after Christ, and he was a prodigy of wisdom. At the age of twelve he finished his commentary, the *Sâriraka Bhâsya*, which is the most difficult and most philosophical commentary that has ever been written on the *Vyâsa-sûtras* on Vedânta.

Sankarâchârya was a voluminous writer. At the age of sixteen he finished all his commentaries on the *Upanishads* and his other works on the Vedânta philosophy. For the remaining sixteen years of his earthly life he preached the truths of Vedânta and established monasteries in different parts of India for propagating the teachings of Advaita Vedânta among the masses of Hindus of the higher castes. He was not merely a preacher

but also a living embodiment of the vital spirit of Vedânta. Thanks to his vast wisdom and unparalleled reasoning, he succeeded in delivering a death-blow to the progress of the Buddhist philosophy in India and thereby placed Vedânta on solid foundations. Sankarâchârya is regarded as the Incarnation of the god of wisdom, and he is revered and honoured by all classes and masses of Hindus in India.

Sankarâchârya made commentaries on the twelve great *Upanishads* of the four Vedas which are regarded as the oldest and most authentic. Besides these, there are many minor *Upanishads* which also make up the rationalistic portion of the Vedas. Originally, the Vedas contained *Mantrams* or inspired hymns uttered by the *Rishis* or Seers of Truth. At first they were scattered but afterwards they were collected and divided into four sections by Vyâsa, the author of Vedântic *Sutras*. The first is the Rigveda, the oldest. It contains the hymns some of which are most beautiful. The second is called the Sâma Veda. It contains those hymns which were put into music for recital and musical purpose at the time of sacrifices and other ritualistic works. The *Rishis* used to sing those hymns with seven notes of an octave. I may mention here that the seven notes of an octave in music were first discovered in India centuries before other nations had them; and that the world owes its first lesson in music to India. The Chinese had only five notes. Before the Greeks and other Europeans had seven notes the Hindus used them,

and the Sâma Veda bears testimony to this fact. The third is the Yajur Veda. In the Yajur Veda we find the description of various sacrifices, and how and when to recite these hymns, or *Mantrams* as they are called, and for what purpose. And then the last of the Vedas is the Atharvâ Veda which contains various descriptions of the psychic powers. How the psychic powers for healing diseases can be obtained, and how to practise black magic, white magic and sorcery, and how one could protect oneself against sorcery, witchcraft and all evil influences of evil spirits.

The four Vedas include the *Upanishads*, and each Veda has quite a number of the *Upanishads* which describe the true nature of the individual soul (*Atman*), its powers and relation to the Universal Spirit. Nowadays, when we speak of the scriptures of the Hindus we mean the *Upanishads*, because the ritualistic portions are not studied so much now, and the sacrifices are not practised in India. Very seldom you will find the sacrifices being practised. Of course, simpler ones are practised by certain orthodox Hindus, but the conditions being changed the greater sacrifices are not practised. In the Old Testament also you find a description of some sacrifices, but the Jews do not perform them now. Still, when you talk to the Hindus about the sacrifices they will mention the *Upanishads* and the *Bhagavad Gitâ*, or the *Song Celestial*, as Sir Edwin Arnold calls it. Really the *Bhagavad Gitâ* is commentary on the *Upanishads*, although it was written or spoken by

Sri Krishna in about 1400 B.C. The word *Upanishad* does not mean literally any particular book, but it implies that wisdom which brings the expression of freedom to the soul, which makes us realize the true ideal of life and attain to perfection.

The word *Upanishad* comes from the Sanskrit root *Shad* which means "to destroy", or "to guide", or "to slacken", and the commentator adopts these different senses and explains the meaning of the *Upanishad* by applying the different senses to the work. In this way, if we take the first meaning of the word "Shad" i.e., "to destroy" we find that the *Upanishad* is that which destroys the ignorance and superstition of the individual soul. If we adopt the second sense, then the meaning of the *Upanishad* would be that which guides the individual soul towards the attainment of the highest wisdom and perfection; and the third meaning will be that which slackens our attachment to our material bodies and to earthly conditions and to the material world. Therefore, that which destroys or slackens our attachment to the world, guides the individual soul towards the attainment of the highest wisdom and perfection is called the *Upanishad*. Thus, various meanings are implied in the word *Upanishad*. Fundamentally it is not a book, for the book does not mean anything,—but that collected wisdom which is eternal and uncreated by any human agency. Wisdom exists in the world whether we recognise it or not. As electricity exists in the world, as thought-force



exists in the world, so wisdom exists in the universe, and that wisdom is like the light of the sun which destroys the darkness. As the light of the sun destroys darkness, so the light of wisdom destroys the darkness of ignorance and superstition; and that wisdom is Divine wisdom. It emanates from God; it is God; it is the highest ideal of our life. If we have not attained that wisdom we have not attained anything. We may be millionaires, or multi-millionaires, but life would not be worth living by possessing millions and remaining in the absolute darkness of ignorance. I would rather starve and go without clothes and without any furniture or comforts of life, but I must possess wisdom, and that is the idea. And in order to attain that wisdom the earnest aspirants renounce all worldly ties,—their friends, their wives and husbands, their wealth and prosperity, and earthly cares and anxieties. An honest pursuit of spiritual ideal requires such renunciation without which spiritual endeavour becomes futile. It is a recognised truth and is upheld in the world over and over again. For instance, if you consider the real nature of the pleasures that you can obtain on this plane, then you will find that it is absolutely ephemeral and transitory. It lasts only for an instant. The highest pleasure that you have enjoyed in your life—if you can imagine the duration of that pleasure, then you will see that it existed for a very short period of time. And if you try to extend it for ever you can never possibly do it. So the highest pleasure on this earth is transitory, and the highest

pleasure that can be obtained under the present conditions cannot be more lasting than the flash of lightning which lasts only for, perhaps, half a second. And when we think of our life, or the duration of our life, and begin to think of eternity, then our earthly life would appear to us just like a flash of lightning. But the soul-life is different. The soul-life is eternal, and if we do not know our soul-life what is the use of living this transitory, ephemeral earthly life? What shall we gain by it? Suppose you have a hoard of wealth and money, and you have become a multi-millionaire, do you think you would be able to take one single coin with you into the grave? No, you cannot. These things constitute your outward possessions, but do not belong to your spiritual stuff of life. In the highest essence you are the soul, and the soul is never enriched by these material possessions. And the Divine wisdom is that which teaches you that even your body is not yours, for you will have to leave that behind. What will go with you? Your character. That is your companion; nothing else will accompany you to the grave or life beyond the grave. You may meet your friends and relatives on the other side, but you will have to retain your own character, just as your friends will retain theirs. Your pleasure and pain there will be conditioned by your own thoughts and deeds done on this earth. You cannot change them, no matter where you go. Your mind is with you, your soul is with you, your tendencies are with you and your desires are with you; and so, if you go into a wilderness and live

alone you will find that your desires will drive you crazy because you cannot throw away your own mind and desires. And as long as you have not done that in this life, how can you expect that after death you will get rid of all these desires? If you wish to do that you will have to begin here in this life and try to attain to that self-control and rise above all earthly desires, because earthly desires will simply drag you back to this plane. They will not help you in getting out of it. They will keep you tied down to this plane, and, therefore, that wisdom which helps us in reaching emancipation, in slackening our attachment to this material body and the material conditions, is more valuable than all wealth and comfort which can be met on this plane. Therefore, this wisdom is considered to be the highest. It is the wisdom of the soul, the knowledge of our own being.

Suppose you are spending your whole time and knowledge in studying chemical or mechanical conditions, or conditions of electricity. This knowledge may produce some material benefit to the world, but that will not help you in realizing your true being. True being is beyond the reach of our senses. Now, how that knowledge can be acquired—that is the question that rises in the mind of all seekers after Truth, and, therefore, that question must be solved. That is the most vital problem, and the *Katha Upanishad* begins with an instructive story. That story tells us how a young man, about fifteen or sixteen years of age, attained to the highest wisdom regarding his own being from a

master who is all-knowing, the Ruler of Death, the Ruler of the departed ones. In India there is a belief, or at any rate there was a belief in those days, that all these departed spirits are governed by a Ruler, and the name of that Ruler is in Sanskrit, *Yama*. He was the first man who died, and he became the Ruler of these departed souls, the Ruler of Death. Adam was not the first man, because thousands and thousands of years before the existence of Adam people inhabited this earth, and they lived and they died in the same way as the mortals of today pass out of existence, and, therefore, when the first man came into existence and when he died we cannot tell.

According to modern Geology, you know that the first man appeared in the Tertiary period, which goes back perhaps 10,000 or more than 10,000 years. So, this Ruler of Death had an abode, and that abode is called the realm of the departed spirits, and there this young man went to learn the truths regarding birth and death, regarding the true nature of the soul, and how he went there is described in the *Katha Upanishad* in this way:

There was a great, wealthy man in India, whose name was Vâjashravasa and he was performing a sacrifice, which demanded that he should give up his pleasure, and possessions and distribute everything he had to the wise and learned ones of those days, to the Brâhmins. This sacrifice was not a bloody sacrifice, but it was a sacrifice of fruits, pleasures and possessions. One should sacrifice

these earthly things in order to attain to the highest.

Now, you may ask here, what is the use of sacrificing that which is in our hands at present for that which we may or may not get in the future? But that question does not arise in the mind of the seeker after Truth, or one who has realized the transitoriness of earthly living. He is ready to sacrifice all his immediate gains for a larger end which is more lasting, more permanent, and he has faith that when he has sacrificed all that is transitory, the Reality will come to him, and he is never deceived by that faith; that is, he reaches the goal and attains to that which he fights for. So this wealthy man was determined to distribute all his possessions among the Brâhmîns and wise men, and he had a son whose name was Nachiketâ, a young boy about whom I have already said.<sup>1</sup> He was about 15 or 16 years of age; but he had faith and he was a seeker after Truth. His father, however, was attached to the pleasures and fruits of worldly life. His father, although promised to give up everything, to renounce and sacrifice everything, still did not do it so satisfactorily as his son and other wise men expected him to do, because he tried to give away those things which he did not want. For instance, he had cows, and he gave away those that were old, dry, blind, diseased i.e. those only which were of little or no use to anybody.

१। उग्रह वै वाजस्यसः सर्ववेदसन्दर्शो । तस्य ह नचिकेता नाम पुत्र  
आस । —कठ उपनिषद् १।१

He distributed all such cows, among the Brâhmins and wise men, and kept the good ones for himself. But his son, discovering the nature of these gifts and the psychology of his father, and also realizing the promise which his father had made, said to himself that anyone who distributes all such poor things and breaks his promise in this way will go to the unblessed regions, that is, the regions where they should not attain the highest happiness and bliss.<sup>2</sup> And, so, he went straight to his father and asked him: "My dear father, to whom wilt thou give me? To whom wilt thou give me?" And he repeated the same two or three times. The father did not answer, and when his son was asking him again and again, the father got extremely angry, and said in an unconscious mood as it were: "Thee I shall give to Yama (Death)."<sup>3</sup> The young boy believing that his father actually meant what he had said began to prepare himself to go to Yama, and he thought within himself what he could do for Yama, as he did not know how Yama the Lord of Death, or the Ruler of Death would treat him.<sup>4</sup> His mind was disturbed a little,

२। तं ह कुमारं सन्तं दक्षिणासु नीयमानासु श्रद्धाविवेश सोऽमन्यत ।

पीतोदका जग्धतृणा दुग्धदोहा निरिन्द्रियाः ।

अनन्दा नाम ते लोकास्तान् स गच्छति तां ददत ॥

—कठ उपनिषत् १।२ ३

३। "स होवाच पितरं तत कस्मै मां दास्यसीति ।

द्वितीयं तृतीयं तं होवाच सृत्यवे त्वा ददामीति ॥ —कठ उपनिषत् १।४

४। "किं त्विदं यमस्य कर्तव्यं यमयाच करिष्यति । —कठ उपनिषत् १।५

but he comforted himself by thinking that he should be the first among those who were living to go to the abode of Death, and that he should be in the midst of those who were then dead, and at the same time he did not know what would be his duty towards Yama or the Ruler of Death. This young man had that real insight into the true nature of things, and he understood the condition of our earthly life. He said: "What is there in death? There is nothing. Like grains they are born and die out, so I shall be one among them,"<sup>5</sup> but what I ought to do in the abode of Death I do not know." Then he went to the abode of Death, and there he entered into that realm, but the Ruler of Death was away from home. He went for visiting some other place, and here you will notice as the story tells that even the gods are sometimes not at home. And so this young man had to wait three days and three nights and there was no one to receive him.<sup>6</sup> He did not get any food to eat, or anything to drink until the return of the Ruler of Death; but he was a Brâhmin, and he was a very righteous and spiritual man. He had a great many virtues and he had great spiritual power. After returning home the Ruler of Death saw this young Brâhmin and he was frightened. He said, a Brâhmin's staying at home for three days and three nights without receiving any hospi-

५। कस्यमिव मर्त्येः पश्यते कस्यमिवाजायते पुनः ॥ — कठ उपनिषत् १।६

६। स च यममकलं गत्वा तिष्ठो रात्रीस्वास यमे प्रोषिते ।

tality was not a good omen for any householder. It would bring evil to the householder. You know in India the guests are received with the greatest hospitality, and they are treated like living gods on this earth, and if a guest go away without receiving any hospitality that guest leaves all bad luck with the house-holder, and takes away all the good luck and virtues of the householder. So, this Ruler of Death, thinking of all these things, was extremely frightened. He did not know what to do. He said, if a wise man or a Brâhmin comes and stays in the house as a guest without receiving any hospitality or food or drink, all the hopes and expectations of that house are lost, and all the virtues are destroyed, and all good works cease to produce their results, and saying these things he spoke to the young man this way: "Oh Brâhmin, thou hast stayed in my house for three days and three nights without receiving any hospitality; thou deservest honour and reverence. My salutations to thee, Oh Brâhmin. As thou hast lived here for three days and three nights without receiving any hospitality, thou shouldst ask for three boons and I shall grant thee three boons, whatever thou wishest to obtain. I am extremely pleased with thee, and in return I beg of thee to grant me all good luck and good fortune."

७ । वैश्वानरः प्रविशत्यतिथिर्नाशक्यो गृहान् ।

तस्यैतां यान्ति कुर्वन्ति हर वैवस्वतोदकम् ॥

आयाप्रतीको सप्ततं चतृतां चेष्टा पुर्ते पुत्रपशून् च सर्वान् ।

एतद्गृहं पुत्रस्थायिपमेधसो यस्यान्मन् वसति ज्ञाह्नो गृहे ॥



This young man answered: "The first boon I shall ask is this: grant me that my father, who was so angry with me, will attain peace in his mind and sleep well, and will not worry about me, and grant him all blessings and happiness."<sup>8</sup>

Think of a son who was treated in that manner by his father, and whose first thought was to return good for evil. He was not like the ordinary sons of the present day who shoot at their parents for the sake of wealth and possessions. So, this young man asked that as the first boon—that his father would be pleased with him, would be happy and sleep well and would not ask about him and after his return from the abode of Death he would recognize him and treat him as his son.

The Ruler of Death granted that boon with the greatest pleasure. He said: "Thy father will be happy and will recognize thee and treat thee with the greatest kindness and love."<sup>9</sup>

Then the second boon was this: In heaven there

तिलो रात्रीयं दवात्सीगृहे मेऽनसन् ब्रह्मज्ञतिथिनं मस्यः ।

नमस्तेऽस्तु ब्रह्मन् , स्वस्ति मेऽस्तु, तस्मात् प्रति त्रीन् वरान् वृषीष्य ॥

—कठ उपनिषत् १।७-९

८ । शान्तस्तद्वचनैः क्षमना यथा स्यादवीतमन्युर्गौतमो मामि मृत्यो ।

त्वत् प्रसृष्टं मामिबदेत् प्रतीतः एतत् कथायां प्रथमं वरं वृषी ॥

—कठ उपनिषत् १।१०

९ । यथा पुरस्तादज्ञाप्तिः प्रतीतः, तै ब्रह्मकिरादर्थिमं तत्प्रसृष्टः ।

सुखं रात्रीः शक्तिः वीतमन्युस्त्वां ददयिष्यान् मृत्युमुक्तात् प्रमुक्तम् ॥

—कठ उपनिषत् १।११

is neither fear nor death; there is no old age nor decay; there is no hunger nor thirst; there is neither pain nor suffering; there is continuous pleasure, continuous happiness. Nachiketâ said: "Oh! Ruler of Death, thou knowest that sacrifice by which the mortals can attain to that heaven, and this is my second boon. I would like to know by what method one can go to heaven and what is the nature of that sacrifice."<sup>10</sup>

The Ruler of Death granted that boon and told him about the sacrifice by which mortals can attain immortality and dwell in heaven for ever. That sacrifice as described there is called the 'fire sacrifice.' He gave his name to that sacrifice, and from that time it is called the *Nachiketâgni* after the name of this young man.<sup>11</sup>

Then his third boon was this: "There is a belief that after a man is dead he is gone for ever; others believe he is still alive. Which of these is true? What exists after death? Tell me this; explain it to me. This is my third boon—the secret of death."<sup>12</sup>

१०। स्वर्गे लोके न भयं किञ्चनास्ति, न तत्र त्वं न जरया विभेति ।

उभे तीर्त्वा अश्नाया-पिपासे, शोकातिगो मोदते स्वर्गलोके ॥

—कठ उपनिषद् १।१२

११। तत्रैव नाग्ना भवितायमग्निः ।—कठ उपनिषद् १।१६

१२। येयं प्रेते विचिकित्सा मनुष्ये

अस्तीत्येके नायमस्तीति वैके ।

एतद् विद्यामनुयिहस्त्वयाहं

वराहामेव वरस्तृतीयः ॥

—कठ उपनिषद् १।२०

The Ruler did not want to explain it to him right away. He wanted to test the mental condition and the spiritual nature of the disciple; so he said: "Oh Nachiketâ, even the gods are doubtful regarding this question. They do not know the right answer to this question. It is very difficult to understand. Ask for some other boon and I shall grant it to thee with pleasure."<sup>13</sup> Nachiketâ replied: "When gods do not know the answer to this question, and when there is none wiser than thyself, Oh, Ruler of Death, I shall not ask for any other boon." "Where shall I get any teacher better than thee? So there is no other boon equal to this. I must know that secret."<sup>14</sup>

The Ruler of Death said: "Ask for longevity. If thou wishest to live for hundreds of years, I shall grant it to thee with pleasure. Ask for children and grandchildren and great grandchildren, all the animals, like horses and elephants; and wealth, gold and all jewels and gems; and if thou wishest to be a ruler of earth or ruler of any

१३ । देवैरत्रापि विचिन्तितं पुरा,

न हि सुविज्ञेयमगुरोष धर्मः ।

अन्यं वरं नश्चिकेतो कुनीष्व

मा मोपरोक्षीरति मा सुज्ञेयम् ॥ — कठ उपनिषत् १।२१

१४ । देवैरत्रापि विचिन्तितं किल,

त्वन्न मृत्यो यन्न सुज्ञेयमात्म ।

वक्ता चास्य त्वाद्यग्नौ न सन्धो —

नान्यो वरस्तुभ्य एतस्य करिष्य ॥

— कठ उपनिषत् १।२२

other planet, I shall grant these easily; but I cannot grant this boon." "If thou wishest to live for ever, I can concede that, but I cannot tell thee the secret of death." "If thou wishest to have thy desires fulfilled, I can grant that. I shall fulfil all thy desires except this. I cannot let you know this secret. It is the most secret thing in the world." "What is the most difficult thing to attain by mortals; ask for those; I shall grant thee with pleasure." "All these damsels in the celestial regions, if thou wishest thou canst have them, and such damsels are not to be obtained by ordinary mortals." "Do not ask me that question again; I shall not be able to divulge thee".<sup>15</sup>

But this young man was not lured by those fascinating temptations. He said: "What shall I do with these things? They are all transitory; they do not last long. They are all ephemeral. Everything that can be perceived by the senses lasts only for a short time, and even life is subject to decay and death. Even eternal life is not worth living without knowing the secret of death. All the

१५। यत्तायुः पुत्रपौत्रान् वृद्धीष्व, बहून् पशून् हस्तिहिरण्यमश्वान् ।  
 भूमेर्मेहदायकान् वृद्धीष्व, स्वयञ्च जीव शरदो यावद्विच्छसि ॥  
 एतत्तुल्यं यदि मन्यसे वरं, वृद्धीष्व वित्तं चिरजीविकाञ्च ।  
 महाभूमौ न विक्रेतस्त्वमेधि, कामान् त्वा कामभाञ्च करोमि ॥  
 ये ये कामा कुलेभा मर्त्यलोके, सर्वान् कामांश्चन्दतः प्रार्थयस्व ।  
 इमा शमाः सारथाः सत्पुण्या, न हीदृशा सम्भवीया मनुजैः ।  
 आभिमेवप्रतापिः परिवारयस्व, न विक्रेतो मरुद् मानुप्राज्ञीः ॥

—कठ उपनिषद् १।२३-२५

dancing damsels and fruits of life, keep those for thyself. I have no need for them. Man can never be happy by wealth and possessions. No one has ever attained to happiness by wealth and possessions; I have seen that. So, why dost thou offer me all these things? I shall not be happy by possessing those things. For even eternal life I do not care." 'Eternal' is used in the sense of an indefinite period, because the Ruler of Death has control over all lives except the Soul or the *Atman*. But all the material conditions of life and even the celestial conditions of existence are subject to change. "Who will care for a long life after knowing the conditions of the world? I do not care to live a long life. I do not care to live for thousands of years. What shall I do with such a long life if I cannot have the highest wisdom, the highest knowledge." "Where there is such a great doubt and even the gods that the bright angels do not know the answer to this doubt, do thou tell me that, and that is my boon."<sup>16</sup>

१६ । ओमावा मतेत्य यदन्तकै तप, सर्वेन्द्रियाणां जरयन्ति तेजः ।  
 अपि सर्वं जीवितमल्पमेव, तवैव बाह्यस्तव मृत्यु-गीते ॥  
 न वित्ते न तपेनीयो मनुष्यो, लक्ष्म्यामहे वित्तप्रद्रावम चेत्वा ।  
 जीविष्यामो यावदीषिष्यसि त्वं, वरन्तु मे वरनीयः स एव ॥  
 अजीयेताममृतानामुपेत्य, जीयेन्मर्त्यः क्वचःस्थ प्रजान् ।  
 अमिष्यायन् वनं रतिप्रमोदान्, अतिदीर्घं जीवितं को रमेत ॥  
 यस्मिन्निदं विचिकित्सन्ति मृत्यो, यत् साम्प्रदाये महति नूहि नस्तत् ।  
 योऽहं वरो गूढमनुप्रविष्टो, नान्यं तस्माज्जचिकेता ब्रूहीते ॥

This young man would not accept any other boon than the boon of the secret of death. So, when Nachiketâ who was a real seeker after Truth, was seeking for the highest wisdom he went to his master, the master who is the Ruler of Death. This is a story, of course, and this story has a real value. Those who have attained to the highest knowledge, those who have attained to immortality by reaching the state of superconsciousness, can alone explain the secret of death. Others cannot. Mortals do not know what will happen after death, but if you wish to know the secret of death you will have to enter into that state of superconsciousness. You will have to commune with the Infinite Being, and that knowledge will come to you, and that knowledge was possessed by this great teacher. Who this teacher was, we do not know, but he is described as the Ruler of Death. And this young man was not to be tempted by any of the pleasures and beauties of this world. He was absolutely free from attachment to all worldly conditions, and, therefore, he was ready for the highest wisdom. And what the Ruler of Death said afterwards we shall follow in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER II

### THE RULER OF DEATH

In the last chapter we heard how the young man went to the abode of Death and asked for three boons. The first two boons were granted, the third boon was asked by Nachiketâ and it was about the mystery of death.

Nachiketâ said: "Oh, Ruler of Death, there is this doubt that when a man dies some people say that he still lives, that he continues to exist; but others declare that he is dead and gone for ever, he does not exist. Which of these is true?" And such was the nature of the third boon which the young man asked of the Ruler of Death.

We have already noticed how the Ruler of Death wanted to test the sincerity and earnestness of this seeker after Truth. In India it is customary for a spiritual teacher to test the sincerity and earnestness of the student before the former transmits knowledge to the latter. Spiritual pursuit is a serious undertaking. Mere curiosity is not enough in that path. What one requires is deep loyalty to the ideal. Curiosity-mongers will never reach the highest goal until their hearts and souls have become sincere and earnest. Earnest seekers after Truth are very rare and, therefore, the spiritual teachers keep their disciples for a long time, test them and find whether they are true

seekers after Truth, or not, before they give their higher instructions. And the Ruler of Death, assuming the position of a spiritual teacher of India, asked Nachiketâ whether he would not like to have some other boon instead of that desired one, because it is very difficult to answer. To acquire that knowledge regarding our nature after death is even desired by the Devas, the bright spirits and angels and the departed spirits. The departed spirits do not know their own conditions. Some people think that everybody who passes out, becomes absolutely conscious of his future after his death, or his real state after death. But this is not true. Very few know, very few understand the laws. Some of the spiritualists declare that all those who depart, become immortals right after death, but that is untrue. They do not remain in that state for ever. They may be born again and again, and some of the spirits admit the reincarnation or rebirth of the soul. Others do not know anything about it. Those who are born and brought up in the theories and doctrines of Christianity i.e., in the one-birth theory, think it is the first and last birth, and even after death they retain that idea; and if you ask them questions they will answer that they will never be born again. But those who have learnt a little more, or perhaps advanced a little more, will say differently. And, therefore, amongst the departed spirits you will find just as much variety of opinion as amongst living mortals; and that will give you an idea how difficult it is to know the real truth.



What is the real truth? Only that is known to Yama, the Ruler of Death, and, therefore, this young man, who was a real, sincere and earnest seeker after Truth, wanted to know that from the Ruler of Death, and not from any other being, not even from the Devas or bright spirits, because they have different opinions and sometimes they are doubtful. And he was not persuaded by any of the temptations which the Ruler of Death offered him as his third boon. The Ruler of Death asked him to go to heaven and enjoy the celestial pleasures, or to remain on earth and enjoy all wordly bliss to have many children and grandchildren, possess all the beautiful horses and chariots and other conveyances, and be an emperor of the country, or an emperor of the world, or take a long life which may last for hundreds of years. The Ruler of Death was willing to grant any of these precious boons or any other boon equal to them. But he hesitated to answer that particular question which was about the mystery of death.

But the young man, Nachiketâ answered that all the pleasures of life are transitory. So long as there is the Ruler of Death in this world there cannot be real pleasure, real enjoyment, because all pleasures are limited and fleeting by their nature. Even a long life would not be desired so long as death is sure to come, sooner or later. There must be death at some future time. It may be after an indefinite period, but how can that be a source of pleasure and happiness? And so he did not care

for the earthly pleasures nor craved for celestial bliss even. Now, celestial pleasures vary according to our ideas. I have described already that the different nations have different heavens and different kinds of pleasures which are also associated with those realms. A Mohammedan heaven is a place where there is plenty of water, shade and fruits, and beautiful damsels, music and dancing, etc. A Norwegian heaven is one where all the heroes of war go and fight battles against their enemies and wild animals. The American Indians' heaven is a place where there are plenty of animals, where they can hunt all the time. The Christian heaven is different.<sup>1</sup> So with the other peoples' heavens. All these heavens are nothing but the places or realms where our highest desires are likely to be fulfilled.

We have certain desires which we consider to be the highest and then we wish for a place or a realm where these desires could be readily fulfilled; and, therefore, we imagine such heavens, or project our ideas and dreams of such realms, and that is the heaven which we can think of. All heavenly ideas regarding celestial planes, *are nothing but projections of our own ideas and desires.* They exist. They are realities, because whatever we think is real, or can be made real. Thoughts are things. If you build a castle in your thought, that castle will be real to you so long as you are on that plane of thought just as a dream is real so long as you are dreaming. But when you wake

1. Cf. Abhedananda: *Path of Realization*, pp. 177-181.

up, it is unreal. That shows the reality is relative, i.e., the reality which lasts for the time being under certain conditions just as the reality of the sense plane is relative too. If you go into a dreamless sound sleep at night, the whole world will vanish in relation to you. You would not exist; you would not be conscious of anything. So you see the reality is relative so long as we are on the sense plane. But go out of the sense plane and you will find it unreal. All the fascinating objects and lovable things, such as relatives and friends will vanish. If you are in a swoon, or if you are in a state of sound sleep where you do not have dreams or know of anything else, they will all vanish. Where are they, and where are you? You are not on the sense plane, and that will be the difference.

So you must understand first the relativity of our different relations, or planes of existence, and then you will be able to understand how thoughts are realities. Even dreams are realities; therefore, celestial regions are also realities under certain conditions. For instance, if you dream you are in heaven and never wake up, you will be in heaven. Suppose you are dreaming that you are in heaven and enjoying all the blessed pleasures of that plane, and continue to do so without getting into any other condition, you will remain there all the time. Then, if you suddenly wake up, the whole thing will vanish, and then other ideas will come in. And other dreams may produce other results.

This world is like a dream. We do not realize it, but we can realize it when we shut our eyes, shut the door of our senses and the whole thing vanishes like a flash of lightning. Where it goes, no one can tell. Then we wake up suddenly. What is this, where has it gone, where does it come from?

We do not see the external world. We are conscious only of our relation to the external world, and that is the reason why it is so different from individual to individual. As each face is different from the other, so each mind is. Each perception is different. You never see the same thing as I see, neither can I see the same thing as you see. We may see similar things, but not the same things. That is very wonderful. We do not pay any attention to that subject because we are too busy with our little selves, and petty affairs. We have certain ideas, but these ideas are pitifully small and insignificant. Still, we consider them very great through wrong valuation and we devote our whole energy and attention to gratify them. For instance, you may have an apartment or a house, and you may think that your whole life draws its nourishment from it. That is a wrong judgment. You are crazy to do certain things, to fix it, adjust it, etc. But we do not consider how long our pursuits will yield satisfaction nor do we consider the justice of the cause which devours our so much time and energy. We forget that we stand almost on the brink of death. We often forget that vital point. But if we remember that

life is fast fleeting and then we seek the highest and realize that which is permanent, that which brings us eternal life and knowledge of our own selves or beings. Such undertaking is worth pursuing and in keeping with man's spiritual urges. Otherwise our endeavour will entail mere waste of time. Of course, in the light of temporal it is no waste, but it is so only in the light of the spirit, only in the sense that we while away our time without seeking the highest and best, without preparing ourselves to peacefully pass the jaws of death.

Again, for the achievement of the highest heaven in terms of celestial enjoyment. Heaven as we have already seen is created after man's imagination and it has no roots in the world of reality. Even assuming the objective existence of heaven as such, we are not sure to enjoy there eternal joy. It is a common experience that a prolonged pleasure brings monotony and is tyrannically painful in the long run. Pleasure to be pleasure must be necessarily fleeting. No sense pleasures we wish to continue for ever. If there be one set of pleasures all the time we should hardly enjoy them. Everything depends upon comparison. If we see the red colour all the time, we would see the whole universe red. That is a very peculiar thing. Get the eyes impressed with one particular colour and you would not see anything else. Look at the sun for a few moments intensely, fixing your eyes wide open, and then turn them and you would not see any other colour. That would teach you that

pleasure depends upon comparison, and when that comparison is the standard of the knowledge of the thing, how can you know that this happiness is worth having in some other plane. How can you know the celestial regions are not like dreams unless you wake up and go further up?

These comparisons will teach you many sound lessons and if you accept them, you will be then able to understand whether wealth is worth having or not. Then you will be able to understand the mental condition of this young seeker after Truth, who despised all earthly and celestial pleasures and preferred to obtain that knowledge which was about the mystery of death.

Now, if we ask an ordinary man of this country or of any other country, whether he would prefer the knowledge of the mystery of death to earthly pleasures and dollars and cents, his answer would be in the strong negative. He would rather have dollars and cents and earthly pleasures, but this young man did not say that. He refused to accept any of the transitory objects which the Ruler of Death offered. He simply insisted that he would know the mystery of death, and nothing else.

Any one who has sense, whose eyes are open to the reality of things, cannot crave for earthly pleasures, not even longevity here. But the question concerning the life after death is the most vital question. Everyone ought to bear in mind that central point. Everyone ought to have that question solved, and,

therefore, Nachiketâ asked: "Oh, Ruler of Death, speak to us, explain to us that point which even the Devas and bright spirits and angels have doubted." "There is no other boon," said the young man, "higher than this". The Ruler of Death was very much pleased. He found that the young man was sincere to the core. He could not dissuade him from his determined resolve to unveil the mystery of death. He must have that knowledge or he would not have anything else. Now, that kind of determination is necessary for successful spiritual advance. Anyone who has that determination to achieve the end, no matter what happens, will succeed in the end. That firmness of character is very rare. People who go after truth simply for curiosity lack that basic firmness. They waver and hesitate. They have a little power just for a little time and then their faith is gone, and when it is gone, nothing is left. But we must have never-failing faith in the end and we must struggle on until the goal is reached. That kind of determination is necessary, and this young man's case was an instance in point. Therefore, it is very valuable for us to hold this ideal of determination of this young man. Let us be firm like him so that when all temptations come and drag us to the sense plane or to the pleasures of life, we must not waver or give in. We must hold before our eyes the ideal of this young seeker after Truth who despised everything and cared for nothing short of highest wisdom. Nachiketâ ultimately succeeded in realiz-

ing his objective by means of his firm determination and resolute will.

The Ruler of Death said: "There are two things in this world. The one is good and the other is pleasant etc."<sup>2</sup> "And these two bind the souls of mortals; chain the souls of mortals in various ways. While the wise accepts that which is good, the ignorant resorts to that which is pleasant"<sup>3</sup>.

In this world there are two courses of action. While the one leads to absolute goodness—the highest Truth, the other is apparently very pleasant though short-lived. If we pursue what is pleasant, we miss the highest Truth, but if we go after that which is good, we miss what is pleasant. In other words, the two paths are mutually exclusive and contradictory to each other. Acceptance of the one implies invariably the rejection of the other. Now, which of these two paths ought to be accepted and followed?

The wise after long discrimination have discovered that the path yielding the pleasures of life is not desirable, because what is pleasant must be attended by the unpleasant elements. On this material plane we do not find any pleasure which is not attended

२ । अन्यच्छ्रेयोऽन्यदुतैव प्रेयस्ते उभे नानार्थे पुरुषं सिनीतः ।

तपोः श्रेय आददानस्य साधु भवति, ह्रीयतेऽर्थाद् य उ प्रेयो कृक्षीते ॥

—कठ उपनिषद् २।१

३ । श्रेयश्च प्रेयश्च मनुष्यमेतः, तौ सम्परीत्य विविनक्ति धीरः ।

श्रेयो हि धीरोऽभि प्रेयसो कृक्षीते, प्रेयो मन्दो योगक्षेमाद् कृक्षीते ॥

—कठ उपनिषद् २।२



with its opposite—suffering or pain in some form or other. And, therefore, the wise man after proper discrimination follows the path which is away from both pleasure and pain, and follows what leads to absolute goodness that brings in its train perpetual happiness. That happiness is independent of sense relations. What we mean is that without eyes or ears or senses we still enjoy happiness, and we do not lose it even after having eyes and ears and senses. That is, the object of the highest good is never disturbed by any sense of pain or suffering, either on account of the body, or on account of ambition and desire, or any other object of the senses. That happiness is absolutely independent. It does not depend upon anything and never leaves us. It is greater than celestial pleasures. While celestial pleasures are dependent upon the senses and sense organs, true happiness, proceeding as it does from absolute goodness, is independent of all senses or sense conditions. Therefore, the wise man prefers the good path to the pleasant path. For instance, you can derive pleasure by being wealthy. You can buy lots of things. But you may be attacked by a serious illness which wealth cannot cure, and that disease will spoil all the pleasures of wealth. Many millionaires and multimillionaires have chronic dyspepsia, cannot eat anything, cannot enjoy a good appetite, are over-eaten, over-fed, and consequently they suffer from various kinds of ailments. Have you seen any millionaire or multimillionaire who is absolutely peaceful, who is free from anxiety and worry, free from disease and fear

of death. No. It is very rare. But you will perhaps find that mental state in one who is the poorest of the poor, but sleeps soundly with a clear conscience without having the feeling that he has cheated or robbed anybody, or deprived others of their rights. Really he, who is never worried by the fear of thieves and robbers, who is never disturbed by anything, enjoys absolute happiness and is free from hunger, thirst, anger and pain. He is not dead, he is alive, pretty much alive, but he is free from all these. Would not you like to be one like that, free from all these troubles and anxieties, free from constant rush, constant running after wealth, name, fame and social etiquette and condition? Would not you like to be free of all these? Why not a thousand times. Who can care for all this rush and clamour of the world, unless we forget ourselves entirely, forget our ideals and become like fools?

People follow the good and the pleasant courses according to their native desires and tendencies, but he who is a sage, or a wise man follows the path which leads to absolute goodness. On the contrary, the other path of pleasure is followed by those who are guided by ambition and greed and who are dwelling in the darkness of ignorance. Such words may sound pessimistic to the ears, but they are not at all so.

Pessimism is that which makes us feel evil in good; but this we call right discrimination. We do not see evil in good, but we want to distinguish real

good from real evil, that is evil in this sense—not in its worst sense. That is evil because it does not lead to that knowledge of our true self, our real nature, and it does not bring permanent happiness. Some people may say that permanent happiness is impossible. Of course, permanent happiness is impossible if you consider it to be derivative from relative conditions, or sense relations. Only then it is impossible, because sense conditions can never give you anything absolutely permanent, and, therefore, some of the German philosophers have come to the conclusion that it is impossible to get permanent happiness. So, they leave it aside as an impossibility, as a mystery, as something which is unknown and unknowable, as something incomprehensible. But in Vedânta you will find that the question is solved in an altogether different manner. The Vedântists do not expect to get permanent pleasure within the realm of the senses. Though they accept the transient and the conditions of relativity, yet they do not stop there. They are eager to proceed further for they visualise a state which is beyond our sense powers or sense perceptions. That urge is inherent in our soul life. It is beyond the realm of sense perceptions. It must be permanent. So the deluded men follow the pleasant path whereas the wise ones follow the path to eternal goodness.

“But thou, Oh, Nachiketâ, hast renounced all that is pleasant. All that appeals to our senses I have offered thee, but thou hast given them up. Thou hast not cared for them, and hast not chosen that

path which is followed by the majority of people the path of delusion and death".<sup>4</sup>

In the Western countries, especially in Europe and America, the vast majority of people follow the first path of pleasure. They have no other higher ideal before their vision and they accept pleasure as their ideal; for pleasure has an easy fascination of its own. They accept anything that appeals to them, because this ideal of pleasure is considered to be the first, the most permanent and the most prominent thing. But in the East the ideal is different. There the ideal of the path to goodness receives the first and the most prominent recognition, while pleasures only secondary. Therefore, the whole system of civilization in the East is based upon that exalted principle, social conditions and political orders are there considered to be secondary. In India you will find a selfless Sannyasin who has renounced everything is considered to be higher than an emperor. The emperor will sit at his feet even though the latter is as poor as a street-beggar, without having any possessions, or anything to eat. If a true Sannyâsin is walking along the street, a prince will stop his carriage and salute and kiss the dust of his feet and then go on.

४। स त्वं प्रियान् प्रियरूपांश्च कामान्

अभिधायन् न विकेतोऽश्वात्तोः ।

नैतां लुब्धां विसमयीमवाप्तो

वस्थां मज्जन्ति बहवो मनुष्यः ॥

He considers himself very fortunate and blessed, because he has found a wise man on his drive. But in the West very few people amongst the wealthy classes would pay any attention to a selfless Sannyâsin who is wise but bereft of all material longings and belongings. Such is the difference.

Western people mostly live on the surface. A man who is wise and elevated in spirit, who has no outward show, is nobody in that society. Very often he has no respect, no honour, no position and nothing. He will, perhaps, be starved to death, or be sent to an asylum. But in the East it is often different, there the people do not see the surface. They do not calculate how much one possesses, but their burning question is how much one knows and how much one realizes. That is the difference. This difference should not be, however, pushed too far. It is relative and not absolute. There is no virtue or vice which is exclusive to East or West. Yet it is true each has certain dominating characteristics. While in the East the ideal of goodness receives greater recognition, in the West the ideal of pleasure enjoys larger loyalty. It is merely a question of distribution of emphasis.

These two paths are wide apart, nay, opposed to each other. The one is the path of knowledge, the other of ignorance. That which leads to absolute happiness and that which is good for our soul is the path of knowledge and that which leads

to pleasure alone, which keeps us in darkness about the nature of our own self, and the mystery of death, is the path of ignorance. We never pay any attention to those things, but simply eat and drink and have a good time, and when we die, of course, death will take care of us, and whatever will happen we do not care for. Let us eat, drink, and be merry at present. That kind of feeling we have. But a few amongst such people wake up and get frightened and disgusted. They have enough of all these things. They want something better, something higher, because there is that craving inherent in each soul. No matter how we delude ourselves, there is an innate craving in our souls which sometimes wakes up and disturbs the peace of our mind, and rouses that question: what shall become of us after death; what is the reality? In ordinary moments we do not think of our deeper self. Our mind is busy with thousand and one material preoccupations. But in moments of silence or hours of misfortune when our mind is inwardly drawn, we begin to think of our spiritual life and ask such vital questions as lie submerged in our busy outward life. Blows of fortune often brings out in reaction a wonderful awakening of the soul. Misfortune is in very many instances a great teacher of mankind. All troubles and worries that come to us are often helpful in the long run. They awaken our inner self and open our eyes to the realities of things. They also enrich our mind and broaden our vision. If we never

had any misfortune or suffering we could have never learned the true nature of this earthly life and could have never reached the highest good.

Today you depend upon one thing that slips out of your hands. You shall never depend upon it again. This is the condition of this world. Then you begin to think. Next time you begin more carefully and you do not go wildly with that great emotional enthusiasm which marked your previous step; on the contrary you now ponder before you proceed. And then if you make any fresh mistake in another direction you become still more cautious, and thus gradually and gradually grow wiser and maturer and gain the knowledge that this world is a transitory playground and it is not worth having. And when you developed that mood of the mind, you become ready to get out of it—not by committing suicide, but by reaching that which is beyond it. Then you turn into a seeker after truth, the highest absolute Truth. If you have not learned what this world is like, plunge into it and see what stuff it is made of. Enjoy the pleasures of life, and see the end of it. Do not think this is the end of your life. No! It is only the beginning of a process. Enjoy the pleasures, but be prepared for the reaction. Be prepared to take the other side also. If you accept a mountain of pleasure you will have to carry a mountain of pain too over your shoulders. Be prepared for that, then plunge into the world and come out victorious in the end if you can.

Hold the belief if you can that this world is not permanent and gain direct experience of it. In other words, the world is like a school and we have come to gain experience herein. What difference does it make whether we are in the lowest grade or in the highest grade? The difference is only a difference of degree, not of kind. In the lowest grade you have found some pleasures and some pains, perhaps of the grossest kind; in the highest grade you are finding some other pleasures and pains, perhaps, of a finer kind. That is the difference, but they are all the same. When compared to that which is permanent, they appear to be as ignoble as others.

So, these two paths are wide apart and absolutely opposite to each other. But the spiritual teacher, that is, the Ruler of Death, was extremely pleased with the disciple who did not choose the path which leads to death and who was really a seeker of knowledge and truth, but he chose the path to permanent good, bliss and immortality.<sup>5</sup> The path to immortality is the path of knowledge. It is not knowledge about the relative objects, but true knowledge that reveals to us the mystery we are in. True knowledge is the knowledge of the Reality of the universe. That knowledge is worth having. All other knowledge is only a preliminary step towards that spiritual knowledge. But Nachiketâ,

5. The Ruler of Death praised Nachiketâ by saying :

विद्याभीष्टिनं नचिकेतसं मन्ये

न त्वा कामा कवोऽस्योत्पन्त । —कठ उच्यन्ते २।४



as we have already noticed was loath to choose the path of pleasure which is followed by the vast majority of mankind. In this respect Nachiketâ's stand was unique. He was a genuine seeker after Truth. He could not be debarred from that path by any means. He was courageous enough to break through all obstacles that beset his path. Nothing could make him shrink even for a moment, not even an inch.

Fools dwelling in the darkness of ignorance often fall pitiful victims to self-deception, and think that they know everything. They move about staggering to and fro like blind men making disciples and teaching others thus reminding us of the famous story of the blind men led by blind men. As the blind men are led by the blind men, so those who follow these fools fall into the ditch of darkness, grope in it and suffer in the end.<sup>6</sup> Now, these fools happen to be the leaders of the wordly life. The moment we follow them, we are following like will-o'-the-wisp, and then chase the phantoms of hope expecting every minute something new, but not noticing what is under our feet, and we fall ultimately into the ditch. That is the condition of those people who run after the pleasure of life. They are chasing the phantoms of hope, following

६। अविद्यायामन्तरे वर्तमानाः

स्वयं जीराः पश्चिद्यन्मन्त्रमाणाः ।

दन्त्रमन्त्रमाणाः परिचिन्ति मूढा

अन्वेनैव जीयमाना यथान्धाः ॥

—कठ उपनिषद् २।५

the footsteps of the will-o'-the-wisp, and they are on the path of pleasure. Go to the saloons at night, and see what these people are caring for. Do they know anything? If you tell them about the path which leads to goodness, they will perhaps scorn you with neglect and regard you as a fool. They think they have acquired the highest pleasure in life and those who do not follow their path are losing or missing the mark in their judgment. But go to a specifically wise man, who does not care for anything in the world, but follows the path to absolute happiness. He is contented and happy. He feels deeply in his soul that he does not really belong to this world. He is not of this plane. He is thus different from the rest of us.

"Hereafter does not appeal to the children of darkness—children dwelling in the darkness of ignorance who are deluded by wealth and possessions. Such children of wealth declare that there is no hereafter; there is nothing after death. Everything vanishes with the body. And such fools", says the Ruler of Death, "come again and again under my sway." They do not, in truth, they cannot get out of the trap of death. They remain bound within the realm of death. Death has a certain realm. It has its limits, and they

७। न सम्प्रदायः प्रतिभाति बालं

प्रमाद्यन्त' विषमोहेन मूढम् ।

अयं लोको नास्ति परं इति मानी

पुनः पुनर्बन्धमापद्यते मे ॥

cannot get beyond the boundary of that dark realm. They travel back and forth, round and round. Sometimes they remain earthbound; sometimes they remain clothed with a finer substance. The difference between the departed spirits and us is: we are clothed with the garment of flesh-blood, but they are clothed with a finer substance. That is all. They can go through a wall. We cannot go through a wall; we need a door. That is the difference. But they are just as much within the realm of death as we are. *Death means change of our physical conditions, not annihilation of our self.* Some people think that death means *destruction*. Death does not mean destruction or absolute annihilation, but *the transformation of our life into its elemental conditions.* It means coming and going. This realm is the realm of birth and rebirth, you may say. You may not believe that realm, but your belief will not make much difference, because you do not know why you have come to this world. If you knew why you had come to this world and could solve that question, then you would have some right to believe or disbelieve where you were before your birth. You say you do not know where you will be after death. It only means that you are groping in the darkness of ignorance. If you could know where you were before your birth, and if you could tell where you would be after your death, then you have come to the realization of life. Search for that inner light and stop not until that goal is reached. And when you have

got that light you transcend the limits of death. When you have transcended the realm of death, you have transcended the realm of pleasure and pain. A new field, a new realm will be opened up before your vision and you will see things with new eyes and will understand the import of things in a new light. Those whom you worship in ignorance you will know and worship in knowledge. That which you cannot answer now will be answered for you after obtaining that light. That light is the light of wisdom. Do not for a moment doubt that it does not exist, but hold firmly that it does exist and feel it proved on the pulse. Have faith in it, because that faith involves faith in knowledge and faith in your own self. It is not blind faith because you are obviously something and represent some deeper thing. Remember this truth that something can never come out of nothing. You have come out of *something*, and *something* has produced yourself and *something* is within you. It is a mistake to think that your parents have produced in you that vital something. Your parents do not create you. You may say God created you, but try to find out more scientifically whether he created you out of nothing or simply sent you from another place, or from another condition of existence. Then you will be able to solve that question of birth and death. That light will come sooner or later. From now on the Ruler of Death will describe most beautifully the condition and the real nature

of the soul. So far he has described the condition of those who are following the path of pleasure and consequently remain tied to the realm of death. Ignorant persons do not understand the true nature of the hereafter. On the contrary the wise alone grasp the mystery of self and transcend the realm of death.



## CHAPTER III

### DEATH AND IMMORTALITY

We have learnt from the last chapter what the Ruler of Death said to the young seeker after Truth. He said that the *hereafter* is not revealed to those who are self-deluded, deluded by wealth and ambitions and who are living in the darkness of ignorance. Such ignorant persons do not realize the real condition after death. They think that there is nothing left after death; everything is gone and destroyed. "They," says the Ruler of Death, "again and again come under my sway". That is, they die many times. It also implies that they must be born many times. Death presupposes birth. Here you may notice a vital point of Hindu philosophy. The Ruler of Death does not suggest that failure to realize the immortal life will involve eternal perdition or eternal suffering; on the contrary, he categorically says, "they will come again and again under my sway." They will be born again and again, and will die again and again. As opposed to the one birth theory of Christianity Hindu philosophers uphold the theory of numberless births and deaths of beings. The process is repeated until the realization of our spiritual Self. The utterance of the Ruler of Death is a significant pointer to the Hindu belief in the rebirth or reincarnation of the soul.

In those ancient times, when these truths came like revelations to the seers of Truth, these great thinkers and spiritual leaders did not believe in the existence of eternal punishment. They did not believe that those who would not realize the highest truth would go to eternal perdition, but they believed in rebirth of the soul, or reincarnation of the soul, and that idea is conveyed here.

Eternal perdition is only emphasized in the Semetic religions like Judaism, Christianity and Muhammedanism. Of course, we find this idea in Zoroastrianism too. But in the religions of ancient and modern India we do not find such belief; on the contrary, we do find the idea of reincarnation very strongly upheld. Sinners in Hindu view will be born again on this earth. Here in this life we receive the results of heaven and hell. We can make life heavenly or hellish according to our thoughts and deeds. Heaven and hell represent essentially certain mental conditions which are in their turn determined by our thoughts and actions.

Of course, the idea of heaven existed in ancient India, but that heaven was not considered eternal in the same sense as the Christian heaven is eternal. That is, the Christian conception of heaven implies eternal existence and the same condition will be continued without having any cessation or end. But in India the idea is very different. Here the people believe in many heavens, and all these heavens or existence are determined by our

thoughts and deeds. They are eternal only *in a relative sense*, that is, they last only for an indefinite period of time. For instance, those who go to heaven to enjoy the celestial pleasures will stay there so long as their good works and good thoughts would permit them. There is a limit to good thoughts and deeds, and there is also a limit to the results derived from those good thoughts and deeds. Eternal heaven, according to the religions of India, is practically impossible. Because when we think what is the meaning of the word 'eternal', we find that which is beginningless and endless in time is *eternal*. But Vedânta says that temporal things are not permanent at all. The things that are the members of time and space are impermanent and perishable always.

Now, can you think of a realm of existence where there was no beginning, or any state or condition of pleasure or happiness, where there would be neither beginning nor end in the literal sense of the term? We cannot conceive of such a state or realm, but we can think of a realm where there is beginning of pleasure, and that pleasure will continue for an indefinite period of time. That we can imagine easily. That is the secondary meaning of the word 'eternal'—a comparatively longer period. Our earthly pleasures are limited by time; they do not continue for a long period. Celestial pleasures are similar to the pleasures of this earth, they may last for a longer period, perhaps for an indefinite period of time, but it will perish at last.



And there are grades, different degrees of pleasure in different realms or heavens. Those realms afford us such pleasures as we desire most, and as our desires vary, the realm where we should enter after our death will also vary. Certain desires will carry us to a particular realm. Other desires of a different nature will take us into other realms, and those desires which cannot be fulfilled anywhere except on this earth will bring us back to this plane of existence. This approach is very rational, and it has a strong appeal to all thinking minds.

But the question which this young seeker after Truth asked was on the immortal part of our being. The word 'immortal' means *what is not subject to change of any kind*. Anything that is subject to change is within time and space. But if we desire to have anything or know anything that is unchanging, we must seek it in a realm beyond the categories of time, space and causation.

Our physical bodies, are subject to death, decay and change. Why? Because they are born in time, they are extended in space, and they are subject to the laws of causation. The whole phenomenal universe is of a similar nature. It exists under the same conditions—that is, within time, space and causation. Therefore, we see this phenomenal universe so changeful. It is constantly changing in its process; there seems to be lacking any permanent in it. But if we can find anything that is not subject to time

and space, and which transcends all the laws of causation, then that thing is truly immortal and beyond the reach of death.

Now, where is that deathless immortal thing? How can we find it? Where does it exist? What is it like? Those questions naturally arise in the mind of the seeker after Truth and Immortality.

Those who are born and brought up in Christianity think of immortal life as just like the continuation of the phenomenal life, only with a little difference. That difference is only in degree. They think that they will retain their bodies and have all the desires and thirst for pleasures and continue to enjoy life. That is simply impossible; because, in the first place, this physical body we cannot carry with us after death, this body we shall have to leave. And some people console themselves by thinking that the physical body will resurrect after death and all the bones and dust will be put together and they will assume another physical form, or perhaps the same body as we have at present, and that body will last forever. These ideas, however satisfactory may appear to those who are children in the game of life, are hopelessly inadequate for the thinking and rational ones. As soon as you face the facts of life boldly and deeply, those ideas appear to you as fantastic. Then you realize that the material body cannot be revived and cannot last forever. Consequently you will have to give up those hopes.

Then it can be asked what kind of body will remain after death? The answer naturally comes that the spiritual body remains after death. But what is the spiritual body? The spiritual body is nothing but finer matter,—finer matter put together by finer forces, and that spiritual body is also subject to change. It may last for a longer period, but we cannot call it immortal in its truest sense. That also is subject to change; it will also die in its course.

So, immortal body is not like an apparition, or a ghost-like something which materializes. That is not the immortal thing in the true sense of the term, because that form also is temporary. There is *something* behind it which is beyond time and space, above the reach of our senses. That is really immortal. What is that? If we do not understand that central point, we cannot solve or even discover the mystery of death. Because death or the realm of death exists beyond the reach of our senses. Death attacks our mental or thought forms. Death does not mean 'destruction,' it simply means *change*. Our mental or thought form is equally subject to change as our physical gross body. You can create a thought body by your imagination. It would appear to you like a dream body, and that body may talk to you, may be perceptible to your senses too, but you cannot prevent it from being changeful. It is beyond your power to set limits to its changing career. As the dream body is subject to change, as imaginary bodies are sub-



ject to decay, so the spirit-body in that sense, is subject to change. That is, what we call subtle body (*sukhma shariram*) is also subject to change. Beyond all change and decay is that immortal part within us. It is not the same thing as spirit in its ordinary sense. It is not the same thing as our physical form, but it is different, and we must find that out. The seeker after Truth who went to the abode of death and who asked these questions to the Ruler of Death was extremely anxious to know that immortal something which transcend the realm of death. But the Ruler of Death said that it was very difficult to know that immortal part of our being.

Very few people care for that vital part of our being and those who can realise it are fewer still. In fact, most people do not at all care for it. They are absorbed in business or other material pursuits. They never think of their immortal nature. They have no occasion, no chance to think or hear about it. Consequently, they cannot realize it. It is not outside of us; it is already within us. It is our real self. But we do not pay any attention to it; we do not think of it. We are immortal by our birthright, though we do not know it. But what part of us is immortal we ought to know, and it ought to be our first and foremost duty to know that vital element. But, strange to say, very few people hear of it, and those who do hear about this immortal nature cannot realize it, cannot under-

stand it. In churches and other places you hear of immortality and immortal life. You have heard it so many times, but have you understood what is the deeper implication of the concept of immortality? And, therefore, the Ruler of Death says that few amongst those who have heard about it can realize it. Why? Because for that realization a worthy teacher is as much necessary as a worthy pupil. The speaker who has realized it must be wonderful, and the listener or seeker after this must also be wonderful.<sup>1</sup> But such combinations are few and far between.

Now, you see the teacher must be wonderful, and the student must be wonderful. A teacher of immortality, or the immortal part of our being, must be something different from ordinary teachers. Ordinary teachers cannot reveal this truth, because they do not know it themselves. And ordinary students, unless their heart, soul and intellect are purified, cannot grasp it even when it is explained. That is the first difficulty. We must go through different grades of evolution: mental, mortal, intellectual and spiritual

१। अवस्थायापि बह्विध्यां न लभ्यः,

श्रुत्वन्तोऽपि बहवो यं न विष्णुः ।

आम्बरीषोऽस्य वक्ता कुशलोऽस्य लब्ध्वा

आम्बरीषं शता कुशलानुशिष्टः ॥

—Katha-Upanishad, 1.2.7.

In the Bhagavat Gita (2.29) we also find,

आम्बरीषवत् पश्यति कश्चिदेनमाम्बरीषवद् वदति तथैव चान्यः ।

आम्बरीषवच्चैनमन्यः श्रुत्वोति, श्रुत्वाप्येव वेदं न वेदं करिष्यत ॥

evolutions before we can realize that subtle substance which is our true being, which is our immortal nature. Ordinary speakers may talk of immortal life, but if you ask them the question: "Have you realized immortal life, or the immortal part of your own being?" they will be confused. Ordinary lecturers and speakers do not know anything about it. Book learning cannot reveal it. It is a different kind of knowledge. You cannot acquire the knowledge of immortality by reading books. You will have to *feel* it, and that *feeling* must be the result of long practice—long practice of concentration (*dhâranâ*), meditation (*dhyâna*) and *Samâdhi*. Practice of Yoga is necessary in order to feel the immortal part; and once you have *felt* it in your soul, you become free from the fear of death. When you have once realized your own being as free from the physical body, free from mind, free from all sense perceptions, above this phenomenal world, and not subject to the laws of nature, then and then only you have realized your immortal being. And that *feeling* can be acquired only through the teaching of such a realized master, and not from ordinary run of teachers who teach by merely reading books.

The realized master has the power to open the spiritual eye of one who is deeply striving, one whose heart and soul are purified. If the student's heart, soul and intellect are not purified, the master's efforts will not produce the required result. The student will have to go through dif-

ferent grades of evolution. That evolution will come by itself if we are animated by spiritual longing, strong desires and determination. They are the necessary accompaniments of spiritual and mental evolutions, and those qualities will change our whole nature, transforming us into quite different being. A seeker after Truth is a different being—different from an ordinary mortal. An ordinary mortal runs after sense pleasures. He craves so much for external things, for money, for name and fame, for objects of ambition. But a student after Truth does not care for all these things. His mind is far above these material pursuits. He is ready to understand the higher truth—the truth of immortal life.

A man who is taught by the ordinary teacher cannot understand it, cannot realize it. His mind becomes confounded. But when he is taught by one who has himself realized immortal life, his mind becomes free from all doubts and confusions. By arguments we cannot explain what exists after death. No argument will be convincing. There cannot be any scientific proof in the sense that it cannot be verified, observed or demonstrated by sense perceptions; for the obvious reason the immortal element in us is beyond the reach of the senses. The senses work in and through that immortal part, but the senses in their turn can never reveal it. That which can be revealed by the sense powers is only a phenomenon. Just as a spirit, when it is materialized, can be perceived by your senses; but that form which you perceive

with your senses is not eternal, is not immortal. It is only a temporary manifestation, just as any other phantasm or any other object of sense perception would be temporary and ephemeral. Spiritualists do not understand this. They think that is their resurrected body and they are living in that form for all time to come. But, in reality they are not so. They delude themselves by various false notions. Urged by their native desires and general tendencies they first form certain ideas and opinions. Next they project those ideas, and when they perceive certain things which are in harmony with those preconceived ideas they feel extremely happy and believe they have known the truth.

But that which is immortal, is very subtle. Ordinary teachers will not be able to disclose that. Scientific arguments and logical discussions will not reveal it.

You know modern scientists have not been able to come to any definite conclusion about it. Some say there is no such a thing as life after death and so deny it entirely. And this has been going on for centuries. From the very beginning of the history of humanity this discussion about the life after death has been going on, and no absolute conclusion is reached by those who have not realized it through the higher perception of Yoga.<sup>2</sup>

२। नैवा तर्केन मतिरापनेया प्रोक्तान्येनैव दुश्शानाय प्रेष्ट ।

यं त्वमापः सत्यवृत्तिर्ब्रूतासि त्वाहङ्मनो भूयान्नचिकेतः प्रष्ट ॥

—Katha-Upanishad, 1.2.9.



Those who are on the intellectual plane, those whose spiritual eyes are not open, cannot come to any definite conclusion about it, and nothing can convince them. But seekers after Truth happen to meet such great souls who have realized their immortal nature, and if such seekers after Truth be prepared to receive instructions, to have their eyes opened, the result becomes wonderful. When the speaker (*vyaktâ*) is wonderful and the seeker after Truth (*jñâta*) is also wonderful, the result also then becomes wonderful realization.

That immortal part (*Atman*) is very subtle, subtler than the subtlest of things you can imagine. It is smaller than the smallest—'*anoranîyân*'. If you cannot think of an atom, you cannot think of that part which is immortal and which is the foundation of our being. It is subtler, finer than an atom. The very existence of the atom depends upon this substance which is immortal. How are we able to discover it by our sense powers when we cannot discover an atom by those gross organs? How can we discover the immortal part, the *Atman*, which is the source of our life, the basis of our conscious intelligence and the foundation of our being?

That extreme longing which makes the seeker after Truth well qualified to receive instruction and to realize the immortal life is very rare to obtain. It cannot be acquired through vain arguments and discussion. That longing must rise spontaneously from the bottom of our souls. How it

comes and when it comes nobody can tell. It is the expression of the natural evolution of the soul. Some people may have that longing from childhood; others may have it in youth; others may have it in maturity or old age. Unless all our earthly desires are satisfied, we cannot, we cannot have that longing.

In India, of course, we often find that many young boys and young girls have that longing. Girls of 15 or 16 years of age have that longing so strong that they cannot think of anything else; they do not care for anything else. They live a high spiritual life and devote their whole life to that sublime cause. Boys also often do the same. But in this country, in the city of New York, how many do you find who have that longing in early age, or in youth or in maturity? They care more for money and social prosperity and success in business. Of course, those desires must be fulfilled first before that longing will come, and when that longing is once acquired, it cannot die out, but it must continue to grow stronger and stronger until the Truth is realized.

"That longing," says the Ruler of Death, "Oh Nachiketâ, thou hast acquired. Thy longing to know the Truth is great. Thou art firm and determined in thy desire to know the Truth. Thou hast asked me the question, but I have persuaded thee to give up that question and take some other boon—the pleasures of heaven, the pleasures of earth or long life and all the com-

forts of earthly life, but thou hast renounced them all. Thou hast not cared for any of those objects which I offered thee.”<sup>3</sup> “I wish there were seekers like thee” says the Ruler of Death. He says: “I know how the thoughts and desires of worldly people lead to temporary results, transitory results.” All these results of our earthly desires are not permanent. They will come, but they will not remain for ever. If you desire all the things of the phenomenal world you cannot hold them. They will come and go, and the Ruler of Death says that they are all transitory. “I have known them, but few people realize that, and, therefore, they come within the realm of death again and again because their eyes are not opened.” We do not see that these things are impermanent. We do not realize that these things do not serve the highest end of life. Those who have deeply felt these ideas find no relish in worldly objects and pleasures. They know it for certain that all the works we perform, whether good or bad, produce results which are equally impermanent. Even virtuous acts cannot produce any result that will live for ever. The results will be conditioned by time and space. They may lead to higher realms, to the realms of our ancestors, or to the realms of *Devas*, or bright spirits or angels, or even to the

३ । कामस्यासि' ज्ञातः प्रतिष्ठां श्रुतोरानन्त्यममयस्य पारम् ।

स्तोमं महद्बुद्ध्यायं प्रतिष्ठां दृष्ट्वा हृत्वा क्षीरो नक्षिकेतोऽप्यवाप्स्यीः ॥

—Katha-Upanishad, 1.2.11.

realm of a personal God. Even a personal God rises from the ocean of infinite Reality at the beginning of a cycle, and when the cycle of evolution changes and when the involution begins, the personal God goes down into the ocean of the impersonal Being, of the Absolute. That Absolute exists through eternity, and that which is truly permanent, truly immortal, absolutely unchangeable cannot be obtained by anything that is impermanent, noneternal or transitory.

How can we expect to realize eternal substance by non-eternal acts of our bodies and thoughts of our minds? Therefore, we must rise above and beyond all thoughts and all works which are non-eternal and impermanent.

The Ruler of Death says: "I have come to this realm, the realm of the departed spirits, and I have become a Ruler of the departed spirits, by my virtuous deeds and by my thoughts, but I know that this is not eternal". Of course, a Ruler of Death comes and fills his position, like the President of the United States, for a certain period, for a cycle, and then another comes and steps into his shoes. So you see how the ancient seers of Truth went into the realm of spritual life after death and understood the minute details of that realm. Next they explained what they realized, what they knew, what had come to them as revelations to their students and taught them those truths which they had received from Death.

The Ruler of Death says to this young seeker after Truth: "Oh Nachiketâ, thou hast come to this realm of the departed spirits and thou hast seen the ultimate results of earthly desires and how they are fulfilled. Thou hast seen the source of all human beings, how they come into existence. Thou hast realized the realm that can be obtained through the worship and devotional exercises. Thou hast also known the conditions of heavens, of such heavens which are described with words of praise by various nations. Thou hast seen them. Thou hast understood the wide path, the wide abode which is open to all the seekers after pleasures, but through thy determination, and through thy longing for higher knowledge thou hast cast them aside; thou dost not care for those things. Thy mind and thy heart and soul are longing for something which is more permanent, more eternal than the heavens of all religions; but that something which thou desirest to know cannot be known, cannot be perceived by the senses."

He says again: "Oh Nachiketâ, it is imperceptible by senses; it is hidden within our souls; it dwells in the cave of our hearts; it is very subtle; very deep and very old and ancient. It existed before the beginning of creation and still exists, and it will exist through all eternity. If thou wishest to know this thou must practise Yoga, practise concentration, meditation, and must enter into *Samâdhî* and there thou must come face to face with that which is eternal and im-

mortal.<sup>4</sup> Then thou shalt be able to realize that, and after realizing that, shalt arise above pleasure and pain, sorrow and misery, happiness and unhappiness. Whoever has realized that immortal nature has become perfect, has gone beyond good and evil, virtue and vice, heaven and hell, all duality and relativity, and has transcended all the laws which govern the phenomenal nature."

These few foregoing words will perhaps enable the mortals to form an idea of what that immortal life or the immortal being is like, and when the mortals will be able to separate that immortal part from what is subject to change, decay and death, they will realize the glory of that immortal part. The mortals then rising above the limits of mortality will enter into the abode of immortality where death has no access and where there is lasting joy and bliss. That realm is the realm of the Absolute, the realm of the Infinite. Nothing short of that infinite absolute Being can be called truly immortal. But, strangely speaking, that absolute Being is not far away from us. It is dwelling within us. We do not have to go outside of ourselves in search of that absolute Being. We must feel it in our inward depths. We must go through the layers and layers of our thoughts, desires, ideas and mental conditions, and enter into the innermost chamber of our own self, and

४ । तं हृदये गूढमनुप्रविष्टं गुहाहितं गङ्गरेष्ठं पुराबन्धम् ।

अध्यात्मयोगाधिगमेन देवं मत्वा जीरो हृदयोक्तौ जहासि ॥

—Katha-Upanishad, 1.2.12.

there we will find the domain of the Absolute, the domain of the Infinite, which gives foundation to our consciousness, existence and intelligence. It is only then that we shall realize through the practice of Yoga our true nature which is immortal. Only then we shall remain immortal and free after death; then we shall be able to achieve whatever desire will rise into our minds. Then we shall be able to come to this world if we want, or to go to any realm, heaven or any other realm than heaven. We shall there enjoy absolute freedom. But first of all we must learn our immortal nature, realize it here and must not wait until death has destroyed our physical shell.

We must make up our mind and have firm determination that before we enter into the realm of death, before we die, we must realize our immortal nature and be conscious of it in this life. Then everything that happens will be guided by that power of our immortal life and will make us happy forever.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE ABODE OF DEATH

As you have already noticed the young seeker after Truth who went to the abode of Death asked for three boons. The last boon was about the mystery of death, i.e., what exists after death. The teacher, the Ruler of Death, sought to dissuade in various ways the young seeker after Truth from his insistence on that specific boon. He offered him other tempting boons, asking him to take anything except that particular one. But Nachiketâ was least inclined to deviate from his point and at this The Ruler of Death was extremely pleased with him and admired his earnestness and sincerity of the soul. At this stage the seeker after Truth took advantage of the opportunity and asked another question which we will have to discuss now.

He said: "Oh Lord, if thou art so pleased with me, then kindly answer this question which rises in my mind now. I wish to know what is beyond virtue and vice, beyond all the works of our body and mind and their results. What is there that is above time, which is neither past, nor present, nor future? If Thou knowest that, kindly explain the same to me."<sup>1</sup>

१ । अन्यत्र धर्मादन्यत्राधर्मादन्यत्रास्मात् कृताकृतात् ।

अन्यत्र भूताच्च भवन्नाच्च यत्तत् पश्यसि तद्वत् ॥

—Katha-Upanishad, 1.2.14.



He wanted to know that which is beyond the categories of virtue and vice. Ordinarily we have some sort of conception about virtue and vice, but very few people care to search after that central something which is beyond the limits of virtue and vice. It is, however, to be noted with emphasis that the seekers after Truth of all ages and climes have struggled to find out that something which is beyond all relativity, beyond all dual existence, heat and cold, good and evil, pleasure and pain, virtue and vice. That something embodies the highest essence in us. If we have known that something, we have also known the Reality, and for that purpose the seeker after Truth put that question. The absolute Reality is also beyond our thoughts and deeds, beyond the results of our actions. The results of our acts with the acts themselves are within the realm of what we call the phenomenal world; but the Absolute is beyond all phenomena. It is not confined to the limits of phenomenal existence.

We live at present within the realm of phenomenal relativity. Anything we perceive or sense, or anything we are conscious of, is the expression of relative existence, that is, existence which is related to some other existence. In other words it is *conditional existence*. For instance, our earthly life would have been impossible if there were no earth. Suppose the earth is destroyed by its sudden clash with a comet—our earthly life on this plane would vanish; or, if the law of gravitation ceased to operate, our bodies would

disappear, melt away, and become like vapour. These are the instances of *conditional existence*. If there be no light or heat of the sun, we could not exist. Thus if you examine any event of your life you will find it related to something else, that it is not absolutely independent, but it is dependent upon other things outside of itself. And that is the state of relative existence. As for instance, your sense of pleasure is related to your sense of pain. If you have not suffered, you cannot enjoy the bliss of pleasure. *Suffering is the precondition of our pleasant feeling. We enjoy by mere comparison.* In this way all our knowledge also depends upon comparison. So, if there be no darkness, there would be no light; if there be no light, there would be no darkness. If there be no heat, there would be no cold; if there be no cold, there would be no heat. This is what we call dual existence (*vyavahârîka* or *âpekshika-sattvâ*), that is, one depending upon the other. Within the realm of this duality we cannot find anything that is absolutely unchangeable and permanent. This relative existence is subject to change. How far does this relative existence extend? It extends as far as there is space, and as far as there is time, and that which is absolute or unchangeable is not within the realm of time and space, but it transcends them both.

What is time and what is space? Time is nothing but *that interval which exists between two ideas*. One idea arises in our mind and another idea follows it, and that *succession, the interval between the*

*two ideas is called time. Space means co-existence. That is, if you think of yourself as standing or sitting here and think at the same time of some other point which is outside of yourself, and if you hold these two thoughts that which separates them, is called space. Consequently, time and space both depend upon the existence of our mental condition.*

When you analyze in that way, you find that everything in the phenomenal world is within time and space, but if you can go beyond time and space you rise above your mental states. *So long as there is time, there is space, there is the mental activity on the phenomenal plane, and if you rise above time and space, you come to the absolute reality that is unconditional, that has neither beginning nor end. All the phenomenal bodies like the earth, the sun, the moon, our human body, and anything that we perceive with our senses have a beginning and consequently must have an end. That is what we mean by the realm of time.*

And, therefore, this young man Nachiketâ asked that question: "What is there that is beyond time, which has neither past, nor present, nor future?"<sup>2</sup> Is there anything which is not conditioned by time, which exists always in the same way? And in reply to this question the Ruler of Death said: "Yes, there is." There is the absolute Reality which is the background of this phenomenal universe, which is the support of all relative

2. Cf. *Katha-Upanishad*, 1.2.14.

existences, and which is described in the scriptures as the highest goal of life. It is not an abstract idea but a positive something whose spirit has found an echo in the Vedas or the scriptures. All the scriptures seek that absolute existence. You may call it by any name you like. It is unchangeable, beyond time, beginningless, endless and all-pervading. That something is the ideal of all the scriptures. They may call it God, or give it any particular name or form, but they always and everywhere mean that unchangeable substance or reality of the universe who is omnipotent and omniscient. If we understand the true meaning of these attributes, we shall find that they all refer to that one infinite being or substance or reality of the universe, and, therefore, the Ruler of Death says that all Vedas or scriptures of the world seek that end. The scriptures have not found it, but they represent man's striving after it. They tell the spiritual aspirants the methods by which the highest goal can be attained or realized. Simply by reading scriptures you cannot realize it. You must be deeply loyal to its spirit in thought and action. In other words you will have to sincerely follow the teachings in your life. Then you will be able to realize. *Simply reading books and repeating the phrases will not do any good; but you will have to understand the real spirit and search after that realization with your whole heart and soul. Then and then you will attain to it, and not until then.* All penances and austerities are meant for that ideal. People try

penances, endure austerities and go through all hardships. They perform ceremonies and rituals. It is not for nothing that people undertake all these hardships, but for the realization of that central something. It is the urge of that spirit which drives men and women to live the life of righteousness, purity, chastity and truthfulness. Why do they so live? Obviously not aimlessly, but by a spiritual urge. They have before their vision a central ideal, the ideal of the eternal truth, and it is for the realization of that ideal that they joyfully undertake all hardships and sacrifices and try to live the life of chastity, forbearance, and disinterested love. Their sole concern in life is to realize that fundamental something which is the basis of our phenomenal life. It admits of varying names and forms according to the soil of its birth. Different nations and different religions have given different names to it. Eternal Word is one of its most significant names and this particular name has been used here freely. The true meaning of that eternal Word is described in the Bible in the Fourth Gospel: "In the beginning was the Word, the Word was with God, and the Word was God." That Word is the foundation of all scriptures, of all thoughts and ideas that can be expressed by human minds through words. All words have emanated from it, and it is the eternal Word which is described in the Vedas as 'AUM'. If you understand the meaning of this wonderful word, you will know that all articulate sounds are included in these

three letters. Time will not permit me, to describe in details the wonderful science which lies behind this significant word. Those who have read Swâmi Vivekânanda's Râja Yoga are, I am sure, acquainted with the wonderful meaning of this word. Every articulate sound is included in this word, and this word is the eternal name of the absolute Reality. If we repeat that name and contemplate on its meaning, then gradually we shall be able to understand the absolute, the unchangeable Truth. The absolute Being that can be understood through this word is described as the foundation, the basis of all phenomenal appearances. This 'AUM' is the eternal Being. The eternal Being or the absolute Reality is the ideal of this word, and anything that is permanent, anything that is divine is included in the meaning of this word, 'AUM'.<sup>3</sup>

If the true significance of this word be felt in the soul, all desires are fulfilled. All our desires spring from that infinite source or Reality. The fulfilment of all desires depends upon the knowledge of the absolute reality of the universe.<sup>4</sup> No other knowledge will satisfy our desires, mental

३ । सर्वे वेदा यत् पदमामनन्ति, तेषां हि सर्वोक्तिं यद् वदन्ति ।

यदिच्छन्तो ब्रह्मचर्यं चरन्ति, तत्ते पदं संग्रहेण ब्रवीम्योमित्येतत् ॥

—Katha-Upanishad, 1.2.15.

४ । एतद्व्यवाहारं ब्रह्म एतद्व्यवाहारं परम् ।

एतद्व्यवाहारं ज्ञात्वा यो यदिच्छति तस्य तत् ॥

—Katha-Upanishad, 1.2.16.

or spiritual. ✓ You may seek satisfaction of your desires by pursuit of the objects of pleasures, but the satisfaction that you would derive would be very transient and fleeting. The cravings for flesh will rise again and again and they will bind your soul and make you unhappy. On the contrary, if you have that knowledge of that eternal truth which is the highest ideal of life, you will notice unmistakably that your desires are fulfilled in proportion to your advance towards the goal. Your desires will be satisfied one after another; nothing will remain unfulfilled. If you then desire anything or any kind of happiness, you will get it through that eternal Being or Truth. The worship of truth alone will reveal to us the highest ideals—the highest kind of happiness and blissfulness. We do not understand what true happiness is, we do not know what blissfulness is. We know a little of true pleasure. Pleasure is not the same as peace and contentment. Pleasure is not the same again as happiness. But where there are absolute peace, calmness and serenity of mind, there is the expression of true happiness and Blessedness.

Pleasure of the senses cannot reveal true happiness. When that happiness becomes a lasting reality, it is called blissfulness. It is very difficult to acquire. So long as our minds are troubled by the cares and anxieties of the material world, we cannot enjoy that blessed happiness. It is the highest stage of man's aspirations. And when we acquire it, we become divine and become free

from all desires. In other words, all of our desires at that stage receive their final fulfilment and the resulting satisfaction is not fleeting and transient, but everlasting in character. ✓

‘This eternal Truth as expressed by the eternal word ‘AUM’ is the best and the highest support of the universe.’ All other supports which we come to know by means of our intellectual or sense powers are only secondary—not the highest. The highest support of the universe is the absolute Reality alone. Knowing and realizing this absolute ground of the universe, one is magnified in the body of eternal Truth and becomes glorified.<sup>5</sup> Then we realize our own glory. A spark of that Substance or Reality falling within the realm of time, space and laws of the phenomenal nature, appears as the individual soul or ego, the actor, the thinker, the doer. The true nature of this ego the actor, thinker or doer, is one with the absolute Reality, and when we have understood our own nature which is divine, the ego behind our souls, we have realized the absolute Truth, the support of the universe. How can we understand the support of the universe without knowing the support of our own selves? First, we must know the support of our own self or ego; we must know who we are, and what we are in reality, why we have come to this world, where we are

५ । एतदालम्बनं ब्रह्मेतदालम्बनं परम ।

एतदालम्बनं ज्ञात्वा ब्रह्मलोके महीयते ॥

—Katha-Upanishad, 1.2.17. ✓



going and what we are going to accomplish by our thoughts and deeds. These questions we should put to ourselves repeatedly and try to solve them to our satisfaction. The great souls always ask such vital questions about self and the Reality. But the ordinary run of men care little for these issues. They just shut their ears and eyes, and plunge themselves into the mire of this temporary, ephemeral and phenomenal world. They pursue the phantoms of hope, and crave for things which are grossly material only to be disappointed in the long run. They have not got the thing they really crave for, but they delude themselves by thinking that they have found the substance even when they are chasing the mere shadow of it. That is exactly what we are all doing. We are chasing the shadow of Truth, not its vital substance. We blindly pursue the phantoms of happiness, but are absolutely unaware where true happiness lies.

We are all craving for happiness. Where is it to be found? Who can tell us? Go to your friends; they have not found it, consequently they cannot tell you. But go to the wise man who has found it. Find such a soul who has found absolute happiness, who has realized the eternal Truth; that soul will help you. Ordinary men cannot help you because all of them are groping in the darkness of ignorance. They are chasing the phantoms of hope just as you are doing. How can they help you in your pursuit? Real help comes from them who have understood the Truth,

who are living in that eternal Bliss and are enjoying it every moment of their lives. After death such blissful souls go to that infinite abode of wisdom, love and bliss. They suffer from no sense of emptiness. They are not mere stalks or stones, but they retain their individualities and their consciousness, and enjoy a lasting blissful state.

Properly understood, the nature of our soul will be revealed to us in its true essence. At present we are labouring under false conceptions about it. Now we think we are sons and daughters of Mr. and Mrs. so and so. We celebrate our birthday, and we have so many friends, and we have so many duties, and we are made up of flesh and blood, and we are fat or thin, stout or feeble, tall or short. This is our conception of the apparent self, but it is not indicative of our true self. We have the conception of the body through which the soul is manifesting its powers. The body itself is dead. That which lends it life and makes it moving is our true Self. Where is that? It is not in the body though it animates the body. It is within the body as also outside of it and separate from it. The body may have its birth, the body may have its death, but the soul does not undergo those processes. The body may have its duties, sorrows and sufferings; but the soul is above all these turmoils and changes. The body may decay, but the soul is undecaying. The body may appear to be fat or thin, but the soul is neither fat nor thin. The body may be tall or

short, but the soul is formless. In short, the forms and changes of the body do not affect our soul. That is the most wonderful thing. But we delude ourselves through ignorance and cherish dearly some false conceptions about our nature, the inner self.

We identify ourselves with the physical, material or transitory form; but the wise men think differently. In their search after truth, they realize their own being, and know that *own self is something unborn and imperishable, i.e., immortal by nature*. It is the eternal source of intelligence and wisdom. It has not sprung into existence out of some other object, but it is inborn and self-subsisting substance. It is steady and permanent. The body is constantly changing. Science tells that every seventh year all the particles, the molecules or atoms of our body are changed and renewed. That which is our being, that which is our true Self, remains unchangeable through this stream of changes. That is the only unchanging reality in the midst of all changing procession of forms. Thus, we see we have thrown away our old bodies many times already in life. Where is our baby-body? It is already dead and gone. The young body is dead and gone. In this way series of bodies are dissolving and emerging. We are passing through this ever-recurring process. It is a continuous change. Our bodies are just like eddies, constantly moving, turning and turning and turning in the infinite ocean of ether. We are just like whirlpools—the external matter is coming

in and internal matter is going out. It is a constant inrush and outrush of material particles from our environments and surroundings. *That is what we call our body.* We decorate our bodies, take special care of our bodies, think so much of our bodies, but we never know that this body is nothing but a whirlpool, an eddy in the infinite ocean of ether or ethereal substance. When we have known this, we cannot have any blind attachment to this body. If we do not know this, we shall remain attached to it. In ignorance we may think a great deal of these little forms which we are now carrying. But in knowledge we feel that the soul is much higher than these material forms. It is beyond birth. It is eternal and immortal.

Now, this is a point which may be very novel to those amongst us who are brought up with the Christian idea that we have come for the first time; that we have been created out of nothing for the first time; that we did not exist before, but after death we will continue to exist forever. If we are brought up with that idea we will find it difficult to understand that we existed before, that we are eternal and immortal. But if we ask within ourselves such questions, where did we come from, why did we come, how could God create us out of nothing and if we pursue these vital questions very sincerely and try to understand them properly, our spiritual eye, the eye of wisdom, will be gradually open to truth and we shall realize that we existed before our physical birth.

It is a very difficult goal to achieve. Only the realized souls have attained to it. They have risen above the ordinary conception of our being and have realized the eternal and immortal nature of our true self. We read in Christian scriptures: "Christ said: 'I existed before Abraham was born.'" If Christ could say that, that ought to be the standard of all children of God. All individual souls are children of God. They existed before Abraham was born. We all existed before Abraham; long before Moses, long before Adam existed. *Immortal nature is our birthright.* What makes you feel that you have come into existence for the first time, that there was no background, a soap bubble, all of a sudden, begins to experience or see things? That your phenomenal emergence was sudden and miraculous? That is impossible in this universe which is governed by laws. The universe is eternal and therefore, its laws are eternal. Everything is eternal in this universe. The higher laws and the truths, which form the background of all phenomena are eternal. Our true selves are also eternal, i.e., *they are not subject to birth and death.* And when the body is destroyed we shall continue to exist. Do not think that your self is also destroyed. No, nothing can destroy your self; nothing can destroy your being, because your self or being is beyond the reach of those powers which produce change, birth, growth and decay. You know that atoms are indestructible. If you destroy a chair, you have destroyed only the form,

but the particles of matter which made up that chair remain throughout eternity. They are not destroyed. And you know if you burn a chair into ashes, the quantity left behind will weigh exactly the same as the chair weighed when it was in its gross form. *Nothing is lost, nothing is destroyed, nothing is taken out. It remains the same, only the form is changing.* So, the particles of the body will remain in the universe after death, and those particles will help in forming other appearances; they are not destroyed in the real sense of the term. If atoms and finer particles of matter are indestructible, do you think that what produces the consciousness of matter, the real knowledge of external objects or forces, will be destroyed at the time of death? No, that is also indestructible. That is immortal also. And, therefore, the Ruler of Death says that when the body is dead and gone, the soul continues to exist. The soul lives and is conscious of other experiences, other states, other conditions which we are unaware of at present. Ours is not the only sphere of existence. This is only the material sphere of existence. There are spiritual realms where we can remain without taking this material body or phenomenal form. Imperceptible they may be with our gross senses or sense organs, but they are perceptible with spiritual senses.

If the killer thinks that he has killed, or the killed thinks that he is killed, both of them do not know that the true soul, the true self, can neither be

killed nor is able to kill. You cannot destroy the soul, no matter how you try.<sup>6</sup>

Fire cannot burn it; water cannot moisten it; air cannot dry it; weapons cannot pierce it.<sup>7</sup> You can pierce the body, but you cannot pierce the soul. You can burn the body. The man may be burnt alive, but the soul is not burnt. It continues to exist. If you have the power to feel the existence of such a soul, you can feel it. Modern Spiritualism is only trying to give some demonstration of these souls which exist after death. Of course, their demonstrations may often be mixed up with fraudulent phenomena. But still there is some truth in the theory that the souls exist after death. Whether they communicate or not is a different question. Some do communicate; others do not. Some have power to communicate while others have not. But that would not be the proof. Communications may be imperfect or may be interpreted imperfectly on account of the imperfections of the mediums. Sometimes the communication may come without any medium, and that is

६ । इन्ता चेन्मन्यते हन्तु हतयेन्मन्यते हतम् ।

उभौ तौ न विजानीतो नायं हन्ति न हन्यते ॥

—Katha-Upanishad, 1.2.19.

Cf. also the *Bhagavad Gita*, II.19.

७ । नैनं क्षिन्दन्ति शस्त्राणि नैनं दहति पावकः ।

न चैनं क्लेदयन्त्यापो न शोषयति मावसः ॥

—*Bhagavad Gita*, II.23.

the best communication when we do not need any medium; that is direct and immediate and it is most perfect. The higher spirits cannot be drawn by these mediums or spiritual seances. But the higher spirits may communicate to those who are spiritually elevated and who are above the ordinary plane. But ordinary souls which communicate are earthbound. They are not perfect. They are just imperfect as they were when they had their material bodies or physical forms. After death the imperfect ones do not become perfect simply because they have gone through the process of death. *The process of death is not a purifier as some people think. The process of death is nothing but a change of condition.* Sometimes the process of death brings a state of coma to the departed souls. They do not know where they are; they cannot understand anything. Sometimes they wonder why their relations and friends do not recognize them and they are extremely sorrowful. It is a painful state, and that may be considered as a state of punishment they suffer. Sometimes they do not suffer; they remain absolutely indifferent. All these conditions can be realized; we can feel them. And it is a fact that the souls continue to exist after death, as I have already said.

At the time of death the soul throws away the garment of the body. The body is just like a cloak. As we throw away our worn-out cloaks or garments and put on new ones, so the soul after



fulfilling its desire and purposes in this particular manifestation throws it away and assumes another form. It may be on a higher or a lower plane according to the desires and tendencies. *We must not forget that we make our own future by our thoughts and deeds. We create our own destinies.* Nothing punishes us; nothing rewards us. We punish ourselves and we reward ourselves by our thoughts and deeds. God never punishes the wicked, nor rewards the virtuous. The wicked punish themselves and the virtuous reward themselves by their thoughts and deeds. This is a deep truth central to Hindu view of life. You do not have to blame the creator for your misdeeds, nor a creator of evil, called Satan. Nor do we have to blame our parents because they committed sinful acts. We do not blame anyone, but we blame ourselves if we have to blame at all.

The true Self, although it may appear through different forms, or different bodies, is itself formless. It is smaller than the smallest. It is so small that it can go through a solid wall. It can pass through anything, yet it is larger than the largest. It covers the universe. It dwells in the cave of our heart. We can realize it through the grace of the supreme Being when our mind is concentrated, and made free from earthly desires and tendencies, when our hearts and souls are purified. At this stage we realize our true nature; and after realizing our own self

we become free from sorrow.<sup>8</sup> All sorrow, misery, pain, suffering vanish away. They do not trouble our souls any more. If you can realize your own self, at this minute you will be free from all anxiety, all sorrow, all suffering that you have at present. You are above all sorrow. You are free from all cares and anxieties, you are a child of God. You are a child of immortal bliss. Why should you forget yourself and make yourself unhappy through ignorance? Wake up and see your true nature. Feel its divine nature and be free from sorrow, and fear of death. The fear of death will not touch you, will not affect you in any shape or manner. Know that you are child of Bliss—“*amritasya putrâh.*” Feel it, be conscious of it. This is your ideal. Hold it, and make it integral of your being. You should first realize who you are, and the rest will take care of itself. Make this the first object of your life. You must know what will make you free from all sorrow and suffering,—what will bring you happiness and blissfulness and make you free from fear of death, make you realize your immortal nature. That you should know first.

You may run after making money, but what good

८। अक्षोरबीयान् महतो महीयान्  
 आत्मास्य जन्तोर्निहितो गुहायाम् ।  
 तमश्नुः पश्यति बीतयोको  
 बाहु-प्रसादान्महिमान्मात्मनः ॥

—Katha-Upanishad, 1.2.20.

will it do? Will it bring you happiness? It may bring you bread and butter, clothes, furniture and amusements etc. But do not forget that material things cannot reveal your true self, and it is for this reason the wise throw away all their material things and become free from all ties<sup>9</sup> because they know that these things of the earth have no power to bring them happiness. They have no power to make us free from fear of death or to make us realize our immortal nature. The wise therefore do not care for them. Children of ignorance and self-delusion only care for those things. Those who are deluded by the attractive nature of the objects of the senses befool themselves. No one is responsible for them. They themselves are responsible for all their folly, and therefore, they suffer. All suffering springs from ignorance, and all happiness proceeds from knowledge. Knowledge is the highest bliss. Man would rather die a thousand times than ignobly live in a state of ignorance; such ignoble life is not worth living. But if you can recapture that spark of knowledge which will lift you above this material plane, why then you should consider yourself blessed? Because you have served the great end of life, and have fulfilled the aim of your earthly existence. You become then truly divine. Otherwise, you will have to grope in the darkness of

६। अक्षरीं करिषु अनवस्थेऽवस्थितम् ।

महान्तं विमुमात्मानं मत्वा क्षीरो न क्षोचति ॥

—Katha-Upanishad, 1.2.22.

ignorance. You will have to suffer. At this stage you care for thousand and one earthly things and trouble your minds with anxieties and sorrows of infinite variety. You may pray to God, but that prayer will not be fulfilled unless you have learnt by experience that this world is not your own, but that you are a child of God. Then and then only your prayer will be fulfilled. Then you will be free from sorrow. That is salvation. Salvation does not mean heavenly life after death.

But that salvation you will feel in this life, right here. You will not have to wait until you have gone into the grave when your bones are mouldered into dust. When you are in the flesh and blood you will feel salvation through knowledge—the knowledge of your own being—knowledge of the source from which you have come to this world and will understand the purpose of your own life and realize the spiritual goal which is central to all living religions.

## CHAPTER V

### THE CHANGEABLE AND THE UNCHANGEABLE

In the last chapter we have learnt that behind the ceaseless changes there is something eternal and unchanging. That eternal substance of the universe is not only the ground of phenomenal world, but is also the support of our own selves. It is the basis of our being. Our individualized and differentiated beings are supported by that same substance which is the support of the universe, the external world. This is a striking novel point in the study of Vedânta which you will find nowhere else. Neither Kant, Schelling, Fichte, Hegel nor Schopenhauer would explain so clearly this unity of existence as you will find in Vedânta. The reality of the objective world is the same as the reality of the subjective world, and in Vedânta alone you will find that the reality of the objective world and the thing-in-itself of the subjective world are one and the same.

The reality behind the objective world, as we have already seen, is eternal and unchangeable, beginningless and endless. If we can show that the eternal, unchangeable, beginningless and endless substance is behind our ego, the basic unity of the ego, and the world is discovered. The ego of the individual self is only the manifestation of the eternal substance through the framework of

phenomenal existence. Now what are the conditions of phenomenal existence? The conditions are time, space, and causation. These three limiting factors are called in Sanskrit *mâyâ*. *Mâyâ* means these three conditions, time, space and causation. If we can rise above these conditions, we shall have a chance to discover that central something which is unchangeable and eternal. But it is very difficult to rise above these conditions because our very existence on this plane involves limitations to space, time and the law of causality. And for that reason it is subject to change. Anything that exists within time, and is subject to the laws of nature, cannot be unchangeable; it must be changeable. It cannot remain stationary; it is subject to evolution, growth, decay and death and, therefore, contingent.

Our physical bodies are subject to birth, growth, decay and death as all other gross material bodies are. Take any kind of material body, inanimate or animate, take any organism that is subject to birth you will notice that it is also subject to death. Birth is followed by death. Now this is the inexorable logic of the phenomenal world. Our bodies are subject to birth, we cannot keep them phenomenal for ever, they must pass away and die out. Evolution implies change. We are evolving constantly from one state into another, and rising or lowering according to the process, but at every step we are changing. We are not the same being twice physically. Even mentally we are not the same being twice. We are constantly changing.

In this realm of change we cannot find anything that is immortal, because anything that is subject to birth cannot be immortal; it must die. That is the law, the inevitable law of nature, therefore, if we search after immortality, where shall we find it? Obviously we shall not find it within the realm of time, space and causation, but in the realm above the categories of time, space and causation.

The materialistic thinkers in course of their investigation of the relative and phenomenal world have not found anything that is unchangeable and immortal, and consequently, they dearly cherish that there is no such thing as immortality, that there is no such thing as unchangeable existence. If you go to a scientist, physicist or chemist, or to any materialistic thinker and ask him whether he has found anything unchangeable, he will reply in the bold negative. He will argue that everything is subject to change, and consequently there is nothing which is eternal and immortal. If we follow his path we shall never find the immortal substance because his studies are confined essentially to the conditions of time, space and causation. These are the inexorable limitations, and within these limitations nothing can be immortal and unchangeable. So, we will rather become agnostics or atheists if we try to follow the steps of the scientists or materialists.

Now, the Ruler of Death says that the true nature of the soul or the ego is something that is immut-

able. It is the background of the ego which is unchangeable and immortal. But it is very difficult to grasp it—to appreciate it, because it lies hidden in the deepest core of our heart. We will have to make our intellect very sharp—make our reasoning faculties very keen in order to grasp that something which is really immortal;<sup>1</sup> and the main spirit of all seekers after Truth is to reach that something. He is not to be satisfied with the domain of relativity of changeable existence; and this search after the unchangeable Reality is the beginning of religion. All religion tries to lead human minds to that unchangeable something, although they may express that something under various names and forms such as God, Truth, Over-Soul, etc. But the chief motive is always and everywhere to reach that unchangeable something which is man's supreme achievement.

Now, if you take away the problem of immortal

१। (a) एष सर्वेषु भूतेषु गूढात्मा न प्रकाशते ।

दृश्यते त्वग्रया बुद्ध्या सूक्ष्मया सूक्ष्मदर्शिभिः ॥

—Katha-Upanishad, 1.3.12.

(b) दुरस्य धारा निश्चिता दुरत्यया,

दुर्गमं पथस्ततः कवयो बद्धन्ति ।

—Katha-Upanishad, 1.3.14.

(c) नाहं प्रकाशः सर्वस्य योगमायासमावृतः ।

भूदोऽहं नाभिजानाति शोके मामजमण्ययम् ॥

—Bhagavat Gita, VII, 25.

Here "भूदः" means 'deluded' and that means 'want of intelligence'.



life out of Christianity, or any other religion, that religion would be useless. It would no longer be religion. But would simply be ethics. So, the immortal life or immortality is the foundation or beginning of all religions and as Vedânta philosophy is not only a philosophy, but also a religion, it deals with that question, solves that problem, and leads human minds to the attainment of immortality. If we search within we can discover it. In the midst of all these changes, physical, sensuous, mental or intellectual there is a constant quantity unaffected by all these empirical changes. If you sit in solitude and study your own self closely, you will be gradually conscious of that constant quantity, which is your own being. Take, for instance, the illustration that you have passed through various changes, like the changes from babyhood to childhood, from childhood to youth, from youth to maturity and you will find that you have changes the babyhood into a young body, and the young body has gone away and you have now a mature body. Every seventh year all the particles of your body are changed and renewed, but still you are the same person and identity remains the same. But where is the foundation of that identity? It is not in matter, because matter is constantly changing; not in energy, because energy is also changing, *but it is in your consciousness—the divine consciousness which does not change at all.* Of course, the states of consciousness are changing, they are always in flux, *but the source of consciousness is*

*the same. The source of consciousness is the basic consciousness and it is the constant quantity. It is the source of intelligence. It is shedding its light making you feel that you exist at every step at every moment of your life you know that you exist. Before you can do anything you must know that you are there, and that would be the foundation. What is the cause of that? The cause is the knowledge of your own being or existence.* Then you will find the constant quantity within you, and that constant quantity is like an unchangeable witness (*Sâksi*) in the midst of all changes. For instance, you are sitting and watching your own mind, and there you will find certain thought bubbles up. It rises and plays its part and goes down. Another comes up and takes its place, and plays a different part and then goes down again. Another idea or sensation or perception comes in the form of a picture and you watch it. It goes down again. Perhaps anger comes, or some other passion comes or hatred comes and you watch it. It goes down in the course of time. But still you are there as the constant quantity, as a witness to all these mental changes that are going on within you. That something which is the constant quantity, cannot be discovered by any scientific research. Science cannot reach it as its domain is within the sense perceptions and all its observations and experiments depend entirely upon the sense perceptions too. The constant quantity is not within the realm of sense perception, but it transcends it and at

the same time forms its background by which we perceive the sense objects. The study of *percepts* and *concepts* will not reveal what we may call the witness or *Sâksi*. The chair is illumined by the light, but if you want to study the light the chair will not help you. In the same way the sense perceptions will not help you in studying your own Self, because they have no separate existence from the Self. They cannot reveal any truth *but truth is revealed by itself*. A certain sensation rises in the brain and your intellect interprets it in a certain way and forms a certain idea about which you are conscious of. But if that idea rises independent of your consciousness, it has no existence in relation to you. If something is going on in my brain, you do not feel it; you cannot. And therefore, if you withdraw your consciousness from your body, say, for instance, from your toe, then the toe may be cut off and you would not know it, you would not feel it. If a part of your limbs be paralysed, that part may be cut off and you would not have any sensation at all. Thus, it is the self-conscious ego that reveals all sense perceptions. Therefore, the study of objects of sense perception, which forms the realm of science, will not help us in understanding our own Self. We shall have to try some other method to reveal to us the mystery of our being. Science, dealing as it does only with the realm of sense perception, cannot explain the mystery of the self. *It is the province of philosophy.*

Philosophy begins where science ends. Philosophy is a more generalized knowledge than science. Science is a particular knowledge of a certain department, while philosophy is a general knowledge. It accepts all the conclusions of different branches of science and unifies them organically and yields a truth which is beyond the province of science. Therefore, if we wish to know the constant entity which is within us, we cannot get much help from the study of different branches of science, but we must learn to study ourselves. That is the best of all studies. Study yourself; find out who you are and what you are, and that study will reveal to you that constant entity. First try to understand that immortal nature, and the true significance of immortality. And then, if you study a little further, you will find that constant entity has no beginning. You cannot think of its beginning. You cannot think even of your conscious entity as independent of your body. You cannot. Your body had its beginning, but when and where did your conscious entity begin? You do not know. Nobody ever knows it. And, therefore, it is called birthless.

There are many theories regarding that constant entity which is called in Sanskrit the *Atman*. The *Atman* is the word, because there is no other word in the English language which refers to that constant entity. Even the word 'soul' is not enough; the word 'ego' also is not adequate, because they are individualized manifestations of that constant entity. Therefore, Vedânta uses

the word *Atman* which means the unchangeable something within us and which is the source of intelligence and existence, and upon which our relative existence depends. That *Atman* or that permanent entity is birthless because we can never think of its birth, you cannot be successful. Go as far back as possible in your imagination, and think of yourself as conscious of your non-existence, but you cannot, *because consciousness and existence are simultaneous, it is one and the same*. You cannot exist without being conscious of your existence. That is a fact. Try to think of yourself as someone who is not conscious of your present condition. You cannot. Our existence and our conscious thought are inseparable.

As you cannot think of your beginning, or of the time when you did not exist, so you cannot think of the time when you shall cease to exist. Therefore, you are deathless. This is the strongest proof of your immortal nature, because you cannot think of your own non-existence. Try to think of yourself as dead. You cannot. You can think of yourself as looking at a dead body, but you cannot think of yourself as dead. You may stand by your dead body in imagination, but your consciousness is there and, therefore, you are not dead. You can think of your dead body, but cannot think of the destruction of your self-consciousness. Consciousness is the constant quantity which is the essence of your being and it is deathless. It was never born. Now, if it be

birthless and deathless, then we come to the conclusion that the self is beyond the changes, the beginning and the dissolution. If we cannot think of these two as belonging to us, or affecting us, all the intermediate changes do not exist in us also. What are the intermediate changes? As I have already said, everything that is subject to birth must go like a plant through the process of evolution, must decay and die. A plant is born of a seed. It grows, it decays and lastly it dies. So, birth must be followed by growth. Growth will reach its climax, then decay will set in. Decay is next followed by dissolution. But if we are the constant entity and if the constant entity within us is birthless and deathless, then there can be no decay and growth. It may seem to be very strange that we are not growing. If it be true, it may be well asked what is then growing or dying? Does our soul or the *Atman* grow or die? No, it never falls under the sway of change, growth or decay. It is above change, beyond growth and beyond death. What grows or dies is merely the body or mind or intellect or sense powers. These are the appearances and, therefore, they are subject to change, growth and decay. The soul never grows or dies. It is birthless and deathless; it is permanent and immortal. Perfection, in truth, belongs to our vital stuff, though we do not feel it for the lack of our insight into the true immortal nature. When we know it—when we realize that we are divine part of the absolute entity which is perfect, it becomes then a pecu-

liar revelation to us. Then we really know ourselves as the sons of the immortal Bliss. But it requires a long time to understand the unlimited potentialities of our soul. We often mouth the current idea that we are children of God, though very often we are innocent of its deep meaning. Mechanical mouthing of an idea, however noble, will not make us noble. We must feel in our heart its deep meaning and when we understand the meaning of it, we become perfect. We can be immortal by knowing our immortal nature, which is birthless and deathless.

Therefore, the Ruler of Death says that the constant entity within us is birthless and deathless. He first uses the word "birthless" and next to that, he uses the word "deathless". By these two expressions he includes all the intermediate changes, and therefore, that constant entity is free from growth and decay. It cannot be mutilated. Cut your limbs off or your hands off, but that does not cut off your existence which is the very essence of your being. Your existence is the constant quantity that remains the same, and it is the source of knowledge, the source of intelligence. Your existence is indivisible, it is always whole and integrated. The constant entity within us, which is birthless and deathless, is not an unintelligent something but it is intelligence itself. It is all-intelligence. It is not like a piece of matter which is inert and insentient; on the contrary, it is the basis of all-intelligence and the source of all-knowledge. You may think that you

derive knowledge from outside by studies, experiments and observations, but no knowledge has ever come to you from outside. It has come out from within yourself. You have not gathered any knowledge from outside, but the outside world has given you suggestions, and in your relation to them you have derived knowledge. As for an example, when you read a book, the book gives you certain suggestions, and in response or reaction to them you draw out knowledge from within. Some minds do not, however, react because of the layer of darkness that encircles them. That is what we call Tamas, the dullness or stupidity.<sup>2</sup> It is a kind of layer in the brain over the mirror of the intelligence. It is a kind

2. In the **Bhagavad Gîtâ** we find it is said:

- २। (a) तमस्त्वज्ञानजं विद्धि मोहनं सर्वदेहिनाम् ।  
प्रमादालस्यनिद्राभिस्तन्निवन्नाति भारत ॥  
(b) ज्ञानमावृत्य तु तमः प्रमादे सञ्चयत्युत ।  
(c) अप्रकाशोऽप्रवृत्तिश्च प्रमादो मोह एव च ।  
तमस्येतानि जायन्ते विवृद्धे कुस्मन्दन ॥  
(d) प्रमादमोहौ तमसो भवतोऽज्ञानमेव च ॥

—**Bhagavad Gîtâ**, Ch. XIV, 8, 9, 13, 17.

Elsewhere in the **Gîtâ** III. 38-39 desires for the material things are mentioned, that cover the intelligence and discriminative power of human beings. There it is said:

धूमेनाव्रियते वह्निर्यथादर्शो मलेन च ।  
यथोल्बेनावृतो गर्भस्तथा तेनेदमावृतम् ॥  
आवृतं ज्ञानमेतेन ज्ञानिनो नित्यवैरिणा ।  
कामरूपेण कौन्तेय दुष्पूरेणामलेन च ॥

The desires are the outcome of nescience and the nescience is the property of the **Tamas**.



of layer of dust or dirt, and when that is removed you are bright, you are ready to reflect and react and then some suggestions come to you. You can never gather any knowledge from the outside. If you are dull and stupid, you will not learn anything even if you are thrown into the biggest library or the laboratory or into the company of the wisest men. It is a fact. Everyone knows it. You have the power to bring out the knowledge. Your knowledge cannot be acquired by any other means; the knowledge is already acquired, but it is now necessary to recognize it. But the question is where does the knowledge come from? Does it come from a source outside of you? No, it comes from that constant entity which is the infinite source of knowledge and intelligence. It may happen that you may not know certain things beyond a certain limit, but if you extend the range and take away the limitations, you will know everything. First of all, we know our own self, that is, our own personality and everything connected with our bodies; then our surroundings, the external world; then we go beyond the external world, beyond the limitations of our sense perceptions and see things which we cannot perceive with our senses. The range of our knowledge becomes larger and larger until it covers the whole universe. Then we become the part of the all-knowing Being. Omniscience is our birth-right, but we cannot express that on account of the limitations through which our souls are manifesting their powers. But our *Atman* is all-intelligence and all-knowledge.

The *Atman* is absolutely unchangeable. It has not come out of anything. It is itself the divine intelligence and the intelligence is not the result of any other factor. It is not the result of the combinations of matter or materials or atoms and molecules. Atoms and molecules can never produce any intelligence but they rather draw their existence from this divine intelligence—“*Tasya bhasâ sarvamidam vibhâti.*” It is inseparable from our “constant entity” or *Atman*. In truth, from this entity nothing has come into existence, it does not produce anything, but it is a constant quantity in the universe. It is the centre of the universe. It is the most ancient, the *purânam* and yet at the same time when you discover it, it appears to be strikingly new. *The moment you know your own being, realize your own essence, it will be a revelation to you.* How wonderful it is! you did not know before this revelation that you are birthless and deathless and that you are full of intelligence, full of knowledge, and full of consciousness. That is why it seems to you as new and wonderful. Every time a knower of Truth—the unchangeable Truth, discovers it, and it appears to him in new light but in reality it is the oldest of the old. The moment you realize that something unchangeable resides in you, you will be able to say, as Christ said: I existed before Abraham was born,” and it is a fact. Everyone will be able to say that. Everyone is a latent Christ. So everyone of us is a child of God, a child of immortal Bliss. And if we cannot hold this belief that is

not our fault, it is because we do not know it, we are not conscious of our own being. So, Vedânta tells us to be conscious of our true nature, to know that unchangeable Reality amidst the changes of the universe. How foolish we are that we do not pay any attention to our unchangeable, immortal nature, which is birthless and deathless. How foolish we are to think of ourself as going to die and suffer when, in reality, we are free from death and suffering. If this knowledge comes to any of us at this moment the result will be fearlessness, freedom from fear of death and the attainment of immortality. Who can make us immortal if we are not immortal already? But anything that is within time, space and causation, can never be changeless and can never become immortal. If you try to make your body immortal, you will fail because it had its birth. Try to make your sense perceptions immortal; you will fail because they had their birth. Even your mental perceptions and intellectual perceptions will not remain constant because they are under the categories of time, space and causation. But the knowledge, the source of intelligence, that which is your true being, that by which you know you exist, that by which you know you are sitting now and listening to me, is your Self, that is immortal, and unchangeable. Know that and you will know the whole universe; you will know the Reality. It is the basis and background of the universe. If you know it, you will also know what is God. The very

essence of God is the same as the essence of the *Atman*. Who knows that God exists? Who says that God exists? If we do not exist, how can God exist, because the very knowledge of His existence depends upon our being in consciousness. This old and yet new substance, the self cannot die when the body is destroyed.

If the body be destroyed, the Self or *Atman* will continue to remain. Body is only the receptacle, the gross medium caused or produced by energy, to manifest the powers that are latent in the soul, and when the body is destroyed, the subtle substance of the body will remain constant. Science tells us that it is indestructible. Even atoms and molecules cannot be destroyed, but what is destroyed, is merely the form. The form of the chair can be destroyed if it is burnt, but the atoms and molecules which make up the chair, will remain the same. They are not destroyed. So, the form of the body may be destroyed but the atoms and the molecules that make the body can never be destroyed. The body is subject to destruction, the form is subject to change all the time. We are dying every minute. Who can deny it? But in the midst of this ever-recurring death or change, if we have not realized our unchangeable entity, the constant quantity, what a great loss it is. Nothing short of it can make us happy. But the moment we have realized our immortal nature lasting happiness is bestowed upon us. That is immortality. Then we are free from death, free from all limitations of the

body, senses, sense perceptions, mental functions, intellectual perceptions, and everything that makes us so full of imperfections.

"If the killer thinks he kills, or if the killed thinks that he is killed, both of them do not know that the soul can neither kill nor be killed."<sup>3</sup> It is one of the oldest utterances of the Indian seers of Truth. You have read this passage in the *Bhagavâd Gitâ*. Ralph Waldo Emerson's poem "*On Brahm*" records a faithful echo of this Indian idea. Emerson writes:

*"If the Red Slayer think he has slain,  
Or if the slain think he is slain  
They know not the subtle ways  
I keep and pass and turn again."*

This passage is in fact a faithful translation of the *Gitâ* idea. The conception is unique and hardly received any prominent recognition in any other religion of the world. But in India it constituted always a corner-stone of Hindu religion and philosophy. When I was lecturing in Massachusetts a few years ago I quoted this verse and explained the passage of Emerson in that poem, many of the students of Emerson told me at that time that they could not understand the poem thoroughly. The obvious reasons was their unacquaintance with the Eastern ideas and

३। हन्ता चेन्नमन्यते हन्तुं हतश्चेन्नमन्यते हतम् ।

उभौ तौ न विजानन्तो नायं हन्ति न हन्त्यते ॥

—Katha-Upanishad, 1.2,79.

concepts. In fact, in Emerson's writings you will find that many of his significant utterances bear the stamp of Oriental ideas. His essay on *Immortality* bristles with the fervour of Vedântic thoughts, and in a sense he was the pioneer of the Vedânta philosophy in this Western country.

The *Atman*, as understood in the Indian philosophy, has no form. "It is smaller than the smallest, yet it is larger than the largest. It dwells in the cave of the human heart."<sup>4</sup> Now, you see it is smaller than the smallest. How can that be? Take a minute amoeba or a bioplasm, or a germ of life, and if there be any manifestation of life in it, there is that constant source of intelligence. In an atom it also exists, but the manifestation will be very small compared to our manifestation, but still its existence cannot be denied. The germ of life is perhaps finer than an atom. It may be one hundredth, or thousandth or millionth part of an atom, and still it can become, through the process of evolution, a huge human being. It is smaller than the smallest, but at the same time it is larger than the largest. Now, which is the largest thing in the universe? Space is the largest thing. Sun, moon, stars—all these things exist in space. We have no idea of anything grandeur or more

४। अक्षोरक्षीयान् महतो महियान्

आत्मास्य जन्तोर्निहितो गुहायाम् ।

—Katha-Upanishad, 1.2.20.

infinite than space. The conception of space is the largest; but the constant quantity or the Self within us is larger than space. The infinite space becomes finite when compared to our Reality. How is that? Well, your conception of space depends upon your own conscious existence. If you do not exist, your conception of space does not exist. And from another standpoint you can know that you are higher or larger than space. A French philosopher said once that when we think of our body it is infinitesimally small, but when we think of our mind it is larger than the solar system. You can verify it if you study Astronomy. You will find that the starting point of astronomical calculation is the earth which is like a geometrical point which has no parts and no magnitude.

It can be shown that the radius of the earth does not exist, the surface and the centre are one, and therefore, it is a geometrical point. Then you can calculate how small is our earth. Now, think of the smallness of our little bodies compared to the universe. You cannot think of how small it is. Nothing can be smaller than our bodies, but yet our minds are so great that we can climb the distance from here to the sun, to the remotest star. Think of it! In fact, with the help of our mind's eye we can envelop the whole external universe. How great we are! There you see it is smaller than the smallest, larger than the largest. It is an eternal truth and all this smallness and greatness are relative terms. They can be applied to the same thing only from different standpoints.

In fact, we are all absolute beings. It dwells in each heart. It is Truth. Search within your heart and there you will find it.

The unchangeable substance, the *Atman* can be realized by one who has risen above all sorrows and sufferings, and conversely, one who has realized it has become free from sorrow, misery and pain. Can you have any pain when you know you are the *Atman*. What sorrow can you have? Can you lose anything? No, the sun, the moon, stars, and everything, belong to you. You are the existence and being. What can you lose in reality? You may lose this body, your clothes, house and little relations, because you never possessed them. They are earthly and ephemeral, whereas your existence and being is heavenly and eternal. Do not be like worms crawling on the earth, but be majestic; be children of immortal bliss! How can you think of yourselves as worms crawling in the dust? No, that is not befitting, that is unbecoming of you. Though knowledge of the *Atman* is very difficult to acquire, yet it is the only possession worth striving for. It is revealed to you when you invade the issue by your concentrated mind and spirit. You must rise above narrow attachments, petty attractions and vain sense-cravings which are great obstacles in your path to spiritual progress. The cravings of the senses always draw the mind away from truth and divine knowledge. That is the reason why we should be cautious and watchful. Anything that drags us away from the centre of the universe,



is against our moral passion. We must shake it off and embrace that which leads us onward towards eternal Being.

When you lie down in one place your body lies down, but you will not. You can go to any distance. The moment you stretch your mental sphere you may go to the sun, moon; you can travel in the infinite space. In fact, your constant quantity, which is your true self, goes everywhere. Nothing can prevent its course. It is local yet universal. You are sitting here but you can send your mind around the world, you can concentrate your mind on the sun and you can go beyond the sun to the more distant solar systems and there you will discover truth. Think of those astronomers who are sitting in the observatories and watching the movements of the stars through the telescopes. They have forgotten their existence on this plane, their minds reaching far beyond, though their bodies are constantly in one particular place.

Again, the *Atman* does not go anywhere, but it seems to be going everywhere. Now, for instance, when you go from one place to another, you think that your 'constant entity', the *Atman* moves from one place to another. But it does not move. Where does it move? It is just in the same spot, in the same place. Now, this may appear to you very curious. Well, I will give you an illustration. Take a cup, or a jar or a bottle, an empty bottle and move it from here to the street,

or take it from here to a distant place. Now, you know the bottle, or the cup, or the jar is moving, and it is true that it is moving but think of the space that is in the bottle. Is it moving, the space confined in the jar? When you move this jar from one place to another, the space appears to be moving with the jar, but does it move really? The space never moves. What does move then? It is the jar that moves. But can the jar exist outside of space? No, it does not. Yet we say that it is moving. The very extension of the body means limitation in space. You are moving the body from one part of the space to another part. But does it really move? Space does not move. The movement is relative and apparent to the senses. It lies above the sense plane. From the standpoint of space, it does not move; and from the standpoint of that infinite Being, or from that constant entity which is beyond space, we do not move at all. We are always in the same place. But our senses are so deceptive, our mind is so limited, our intellect is so imperfect, that we think we are moving constantly. This central substance appears to move, yet it does not move; it appears to be born, yet it is unborn. It is very difficult to know. It is beyond pleasure and pain, beyond happiness and unhappiness. You may have a terrible pain or suffering, or you may have pleasure and enjoyment, but the self in us remains constant, through all empirical changes. Your immortal nature is not affected by the pleasures or pain, physical or

mental. You remain the same. It is your body which is affected. The *Atman* is without change, yet it is constantly expressing itself through the changeful phenomena and manifests itself through the body. Whoever knows the *Atman* rises above all sorrow and pain and attain to lasting joy, bliss and immortality. Know that *Atman*. Attain that absolute peace and happiness, rising above death, going beyond changes, understanding the laws of nature, and yet remaining unaffected by the changes of the phenomenal world. And then having understood our true self we have known the Reality of the universe; we have realized God and we have become immortal.

## CHAPTER VI

### KNOWLEDGE OF THE ABSOLUTE

A preliminary knowledge of the Absolute is a necessary precondition for unravelling the mystery of death. The Absolute is not very far away from us; on the contrary, it is within us. It is the ultimate Reality of the universe and the support of all phenomena. It is formless, yet it pervades all forms. It is unchangeable, yet it is in the midst of all changes. Phenomenal changes are going on from eternity to eternity, but the centre of all changes is unchangeable. That unchangeable *something* is the absolute Truth. And we can find in the midst of phenomena something that does not change, then that is the absolute Truth. It is very difficult to discover it. Its realization involves hard struggling. Our phenomenal knowledge, our scholarly pursuits merely give us an idea of unchangeable Substance. Very few people can realize it. Book reading does not help us much in the matter. It is beyond the reach of mind and intellect. It is beyond words. Therefore, the Ruler of Death says here: "This eternal Truth cannot be attained by reading scriptures."<sup>1</sup> You know all the scriptures pretend to reveal the absolute Truth, but the scriptures

१। नास्मात्त्वा प्रवचनेन लब्धो न मेधया न बहुना श्रुतेन ।

—Katha-Upanishad, II.2.23.

are at their best an attempt to register in words the highest truth. They give men vision and nothing else. Beyond that point the scriptures are of no use. The Vedas and the other scriptures cannot reveal the eternal truth. The Bible also cannot reveal it. You may read the Bible for years together but that by itself will not help you to realize the Truth. You may get some idea, you may imagine certain things, but imagination is not *realization*. Realization is quite a different thing. You will have to feel its presence in your soul, you will have to become one with it or it will remain unknown and unknowable to you ever and forever.

Words cannot reveal the flash of realization because they belong to the relative plane. They are but the outward expressions of our thoughts. If thoughts cannot reach that absolute Truth, how can we expect that words will reach it? And those words, when they are written down, become scriptures. Of course, the thoughts are all behind them, but thoughts are on the relative plane. Where thoughts end, there is the Absolute. Thoughts are always on the plane of relativity. Thoughts are related to the sense of 'I' or I-consciousness. If there be no thinker there will be no thoughts. Thoughts are nothing but the thinking products of the ego. There are again things along with the thoughts. Or all things are more or less our thoughts. Things may not be our individual thoughts but thoughts of the cosmic mind. For instance, the sun, the moon, the earth, and all other

extraordinary phenomena, are not thoughts of the individual minds, but they are thoughts of the cosmic mind. When, before the creation, God said: "Let there be light," there was a thought of light, and that thought became reality on the sense plane. But it is not in reality on the absolute plane. It is very difficult to grasp this Truth. However, it is a fact that scripture cannot reveal the absolute truth. If the study of the scriptures could have revealed the Truth, then all those who have studied the Bible or other scriptures have already known the Absolute. But as a matter of fact they have not known it, for it is beyond intellect, beyond mind. Scientific pursuit can proceed very far, but there is a limit to its advance and there is a point where science has no access. Even if it tries to proceed, it fails. Attempt an intellectual flight into the realm of the Absolute and see how far you can proceed. Intellect will take you no doubt to a certain extent but there is a point beyond which it cannot move. This is the reason why the majority of thinkers suggest that it is unknown and unknowable simply because intellect cannot lead them to that realm. Their failure, however, does not prove its non-existence. On the contrary, their failure shows the inability and bankruptcy of the intellect to penetrate into it. It is not merely existent, but the only reality which is accessible to us. It is the deepest essence of our being. The access to it is not through intellect, but through a riper and maturer means. If you try to find it out by intellect you will fail.

The scientists of our generation have sought to gain a knowledge of the soul, the being, the doer, the thinker, but they have failed miserably. They vivisect the brain, but they do not find anything like the soul. Brain is a dead matter. There is no instrument by which we can weigh, or capture, or measure the soul which is the essence of our being. It is the most vital and precious thing in the universe, and through it everything else has become vital. If you become unconscious the vast world around you will vanish right at that moment. Where will you then be? Perhaps you do not know it. Thus everything has its value and significance only in relation to consciousness. The sun would not exist if I were not conscious of it. It exists only in relation to me. What difference does it make whether there is sun or not, if I am unconscious? *So, it is through our consciousness alone the knowledge of everything becomes possible* and we enjoy the phenomenal universe, we enjoy all the pleasures, we suffer pain and know that there is such a thing as wonderful feeling or sensation. Through the same consciousness we enjoy pleasure. It is the essence of our being, the true Self, the source of all knowledge.

We struggle hard to have things of the phenomenal world. We strive for the accumulation of wealth and the possession of other material things, but what significance will they carry to us at the time of death when we become absolutely unconscious of this world? Will this world still continue to

exist for us? No, as soon as we die it will disappear like a dream. How do we know that we are not going into dreamland after death? After death we may not be conscious of things of which we are conscious now, but we will be conscious of something on that plane .

A millionaire or a miser who is just hoarding wealth all the time will carry his desires with him to amass fortune but he would not find any gross substance like money or wealth after death. But that desire will burn him and he will suffer because it will never be manifested in its gross material form. It will not be satisfied after death. How would you like to have the desire for drink, for instance, or for enjoying pleasure or for dancing when there is no dance, when there is nothing to drink, when there is no food to eat, but you have the hunger all the time? Will that state be very pleasant? Obviously not. But such will be our condition after death because the desires for things will continue to remain in our minds. They do not exist in the world outside of ourselves. *They are rooted in us and we carry them even after death.* They are parts of our being. But the material objects of desire, the objects by which we gratify those desires, will remain here. Most people miss the vital point. We must think about the condition which we are going to have in future. We must not act foolishly, but we must be cautious and wise in our behaviour. We must prepare ourselves to face any condition that may come to us in the life beyond death.



You have perhaps heard many times about your self, but that by itself will be of no avail. Simply listening to the sermons about the self will not reveal the self. *You will have to feel it, know it and to become one with it.* We must love it deeply, nay, passionately. Love will bring us closer to it.

Mere hearing of the sermons is not the same as realization. *To become immortal is to become one with the absolute Truth.* So simply by hearing we cannot attain to it. How can we then attain to it? It is only by knowing it. Or simply we must love it—love it as the best, as the dearest thing, and through love we will get it. Love means attraction. *It is an attraction of the soul,* and when the soul is attracted to any sense object it remains on the sense plane. That is what we call human love or affection. It is related to the sense plane, *but true love is related to God.* When the soul of man is attracted to the highest, divine love begins to manifest itself. Otherwise, love is only a reflection or a refraction of true divine love. Human love is a reflection of divine love, and it manifests through the sense plane. If you put a stick or a pencil into a glass of water, the reflection is refracted. It is not straight, but it appears crooked on account of the density of the water. Similarly, when the divine love begins to manifest through the human or the sense plane, the imperfection of the sense plane makes it appear crooked, and that is the reason why we get so mixed up. We cannot find exactly the difference that exists

between divine love and human affection. We mistake one for the other and get into the trouble. Christ said: "Ask, and it shall be given you, seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you."<sup>2</sup> Christ was not the first teacher who declared it. This was pronounced in India at least 1500 years before Christ was born. What is meant by 'Knock, and it shall be opened unto you'? The knock must proceed from intense longing: That longing will force the door open, which is now closed. The door of the soul is closed. The tunnel by which the soul is connected with the Infinite is not open to ordinary vision. *It is only through that intense longing and love for the highest that we can open that door.* Spiritual power, enlightenment and wisdom will then flow into our souls and peace and happiness will then pervade our being. Whoever has that intense longing for the highest will attain to it in the end, that is, he will realize the Absolute. That is the most wonderful thing. It is through love that we get it, but that love is not human love. Human love is not the real love. Real love is different. It is an attraction of the soul for the highest, that is, divine Godliness. God is love, and love is God. But if human love were God, there would not have been any sorrow or suffering in this world because every human being has in him some kind of love and for some kind of object. Human love brings in its train a sense of dullness and satiety while

divine love produces an unfading joy. Love of the highest presupposes for its cultivation non-love for the non-highest. The world we live in does not represent the highest object of love and worship. We must withdraw our mind from it and focus it on God alone. God is the highest good. To seek it is to seek the highest. *Search for it requires deep longing for it. That intense longing, is the pathway to God-realization.* Though that longing is very rare, yet it is the only way by which the absolute Truth is revealed before our vision. But so long as we have not direct experience of what this phenomenal world is made up of, we cannot have that required longing. When we have understood what this phenomenal world is made up of, when we have known the real nature of the phenomenal world, when we have understood the various laws that govern our phenomenal life and when we have learnt the true purpose of our life, all material things will then lose their lure for us. They will then appear, as not worth having. Friends and relatives, howsoever valuable from material point of view, appear pitifully insignificant when that longing for the highest perfection moves our minds. They will stand in your way. They would not let you go beyond their reach. They will drag you down unless you possess what is called non-attachment and renunciation. Why do the great souls renounce their relatives and friends? Because they find them as obstacles in their path to spiritual advance, i.e., in the path of God-realization. They stand and distract, and the distraction they feel so

strongly that they do not want to waste their energy to overcome the distraction. *But when renunciation comes, all kinds of relations appear to be as relations of God, and not of any individual.* Friends also appear as nothing but children of God. In that state everything appears different. He sees the reality of things, and so the whole world that is changeable will vanish with all its relations and attractions. The fleeting world seems to him like a dream. We do not know that we are dreaming now. How can we know unless we wake up. It is very difficult to feel it, so long we are in a dream of ignorance. *But there comes a time in every soul* when he feels that everything he has experienced during his lifetime, has passed away like dreams leaving only impressions pleasant or unpleasant. Until we go through diverse experiences, we will have to knock our heads against stone walls and get hurt. That will do us good. We need blows and those blows will awaken us, and we must receive them with great delight. They are the best teachers; they are the best friends in the world. All these sweet, kind words simply keep us on the plane of dreams, but blows bring out the latent powers.

Unless we have checked all our wicked habits, and corrected ourselves, purified our hearts and souls we are not ready to reach the Absolute, it is not possible. If there be the slightest desire for anything that is on the lowest plane, then we cannot go up; we will be tied down. You must have

that desire, therefore, gratified first; be through with it, that is all. We have come to this world to be through with our experience which we need. If you have had enough of experiences, do not run after them. *Turn your mind away from the world and send it upward to the highest plane*; try to understand the source from where you have come to this world and where you are going. This life is not merely a dream, but it has its purpose. It is a dream, but it is a reality at present. It will appear to us as a dream in future, but now it is a very tangible reality. It cannot be denied, and in our life in this world there is a real purpose and that purpose must be fulfilled. We have come to this world to fulfil that purpose. How have we fulfilled it? That is for us to decide in silence, when we are all alone, not distracted by anybody and we study our own self, what we have accomplished in this life, how much we have gained, how much richer we have become. Then we can tell. You do not have to hide anything from your own self. You know how much you have gained in this life; how much you have accomplished. And what else you wish to accomplish, go away and do it. You are your own master; be fearless; accomplish it. If you have not known the purpose of life, find it out—what you are going to do. If you have not fulfilled it, make up your mind and go ahead and finish it. That is all. Then your mind will be in peace. Unless we keep our mind in absolute peace, how can we expect to reach the

highest? If little things attract and drag us down, make us restless and disturb the peace of our mind, we are not fit to reach the highest. Make your mind firm like a rock, unmoved by storms and changes that are going on around you. If a storm of passion comes, if you cannot keep your peace, what can you accomplish? You are too weak; you are not fitted to enter the kingdom of Heaven. Conquer it; be firm like a mountain, and remain unmoved by those storms of passions and desires and ambitions. What do they amount to? They come and go, but you remain firm. Hold peace, rise above it. Then Godliness will be the ornament of your character. Nothing else is to be accomplished then. God remains firm and unshaken under all conditions. Hold that ideal and remain like that, then you are Godly; then you are Divine.

If Jesus could not have endured the crucifixion nobody would have worshipped him. That was not supernatural. It was his nature; otherwise, he would not have been Christ. That is only the realization. We go through many crucifixions during our lifetime, and if we cannot remain firm and hold peace and keep our mind on absolute rest, why, we are not worthy of Christ. It is the easiest thing to understand and to practise. That is the whole of Christianity. Religion is the simplest truth in the world. We make it the most complicated and hideous through our ignorance by adopting lots of things, doctrines, creeds, ceremonials, useless non-essential

dogmas. Search and enter into their spirit and there you will find universal religion. *It is everywhere the same. It is one. Human minds make it many because they add their own peculiarities to the religion and make it different.* True religion is the relation between Soul and God. When that is realized the purpose of religion is served, and that is eternal Religion. That is what we should understand and follow and live up to. Whether God is sitting on a throne with two hands and a rod in His right hand to punish the wicked or to reward the virtuous is none of our business. Throw them away. God will not be hurt. He will not punish you if you throw away all superstitions. He will love you all the more. Truth will never punish you when you see the follies of human minds. Truth will embrace you and make you a part of its being. Attainment of *Samâdhi* is necessary. *Samâdhi* means God-consciousness. Be conscious of that Divinity within you and feel its presence. How can you feel its presence? By knowing your own self; by understanding yourself, because the moment you try to know yourself you will find that you get an independent idea—that you depend on something, and that something is the reality behind you. The ego cannot exist if there be no source of intelligence and consciousness behind it. You cannot think, you cannot see anything, you cannot feel anything if you have not that source of intelligence behind the ego, behind the thinker. That is the simplest thing, and that consciousness we

must have. That will be the starting point. Then you find the relation which you bear to the universe. If our minds are constantly distracted by the things of the world we forget our own self. Go to the crowded streets of New York or any other cities and see there how many people are thinking of their higher Self. They are thinking how they can rob others and how they can cheat others, how they can accumulate lots of rubbish which they value at so many gold pieces. What is the value of gold? Chemically, it has no value; commercially, it has the greatest value. Why should we be on the commercial plane if we are searching after Truth? Why should not we take the chemical view and see how molecules and atoms going through a certain process appear as gold. That is nothing. That cannot belong to your soul; it is a dead matter. But under the present condition you will have to live and buy your clothes and pay the rent. Therefore you want to get away from a city of luxury and splendour and go to a cheaper place where you do not need so much. Go to the forest and you do not need anything. The society of human beings and all these attractions are temporary. They do not amount too much. What do they amount to. They give you some experiences and you learn some lessons, and when you have learnt that, get out of it. You need not spend your whole lifetime in following those ideals of society and social advantages. They have no meaning. Sometimes when you are young and full of enthusiasm, full of desires and ambition, then these appear to be attractive, but after gaining



some experience and receiving some blows and learning the inner working out of all the lives of those society-people, you find this as waste of time, and the sooner you get out the better it is for you. And then you think of yourself, then of God, and also of what will happen to you after death. All these questions will come then, and you will try to solve them.

The Absolute swallows up everything. He is the destroyer of death. Death destroys everything. Dissolution destroys everything, but the destroyer of death is that Absolute (*Brahman*). Death does not exist then. All the phenomena of the sense plane with all its attractions are swallowed up by the Absolute. "The Absolute eats up, as it were, all these things, and death is the condiment. The names and forms of phenomena are like the food and death is the sauce."<sup>3</sup> When we reach the Absolute all these things disappear. The moment you withdraw yourself from the sense plane the external world, with all its beauty, is gone. If you do not have eye-sight, or if you are colour-blind, when the colour is gone this world would not be attractive at all. It is only the eye that makes all this attraction. Colour is nothing but a certain state of vibration you know, and you cannot depend upon that. You do not see anything outside. You only imagine that you see external things and there

३। यस्य ज्ञानं च ज्ञानं तमे भवतु शोचनः ।

यत्पुण्यं सोपसेव्यं क इत्या वेदं यत् सः ॥

—Katha-Upanishad, VI. 1. 25.

some other changes take place and that is all, and then your ego interprets that vibration into sense, and then you think you are seeing. You do not see anything outside. You have no power to see anything outside. You are not even conscious of the inverted image of the object on the retina. So, all these beautiful flowers and beautiful things are the images of certain things which you have never seen. We project our sensations into the external world and feel happy. Science has opened our eyes to these things. Still, we are so much in ignorance that we cannot wake up. We cannot see things straight. We cannot realize things as they are in reality. If you withdraw your mind from the organ of hearing there is no more sound in the world, but will prevail dead silence. The sounds may go on, that will have nothing to do with you. You withdraw your mind from the sense of touch, you will feel nothing hard or soft or hot or cold. Our five senses have made this world which we feel. When our mind is withdrawn from these five senses the whole world is changed. Other people may not believe because they have five senses and their mind is attached to those five senses; consequently, they feel as you felt before you had withdrawn. Analyze your own perceptions and see things as they are. Do not be fools, and do not be fooled by anybody. If you are a seeker after Truth you cannot remain a fool any more; and that is what Vedânta teaches. It tells why you people live like fools. *Let people see things as they are in reality and live in harmony with the Reality, and*

*not with those images and attractions which are only on the surface.* They do not amount too much. Of course, they do amount to a good deal to persons who are living on this plane. If you are living on the surface of course, these attractions are quite necessary to you. We do not doubt that. But from the standpoint of Reality, from the standpoint of the Absolute they are all very unimportant things and transitory. They do not enrich the soul. Our whole life with all its experiences makes up a character. All the experiences that we have gathered during our lifetime will vanish just after death, but they will leave an impression upon our character, and that character will remain with us. We have received a great many impressions through our past experiences and those impressions are with us, and will remain with us. You cannot get rid of them very easily. Everything that we have suffered, everything that we have enjoyed has left a stamp upon our souls and upon our character; we take it with us, and that impression is the cause of future desire, which will be of a similar nature and will force us to repeat the same experience over and over again. If you study your own life, you will find that it is so even now. The same thing that you have enjoyed you want to be repeated, and you cannot help it. This gives us a great lesson: the character which we have built by our thoughts and deeds and through our desires is a more permanent thing than our physical body, than all the possessions that we have, so be careful. If you remember that, it will

help you a great deal in your existence throughout eternity. You must not be unmindful of this. Another thing we should remember: by our character we create our destiny and make our future. Whatever we shall be in future we are sowing its seed now; and if we have sown wheat we cannot expect to reap peas; we must get wheat. This is inexorable. You cannot get peas from wheat and it is an eternal law. We are all bound and chained down by that law. Whatsoever thou sowest thou shalt reap. So, whatever you think of, whatever you do, whatever you experience, remember this law, that you are under this law of action and reaction, the law of cause and sequence at every moment of your life. If you do not forget it, you would never be able to do anything wrong. There is no need of any fear of punishment, hell-fire, or Devil. Throw them overboard in the mid-ocean. They do not do any good. They simply keep the people in ignorance and superstition. But this is the law that you cannot get peas if you sow wheat, and it will appeal to everybody. The whole future is built upon this law which we see everyday before our eyes. If we wish to understand the mystery of death we must first understand this law.

Having described the Absolute and its relation to the universe, the Ruler of Death now describes the relation of the individual ego to the Absolute.

Two have entered into the cave of the heart, dwelling on the highest summit of the spiritual space. The seers of Truth say the one is like the self-

effulgent sun, the other is like the image or reflection.<sup>1</sup> The one is like a witness, while the other eats the fruits of its own thoughts and deeds. There are two things within us: the one is the eternal, absolute, unchangeable substance, and the other is the ego, the doer, thinker, actor, enjoyer, sufferer. The relation between the two is like the relation of a reflection of the sun to the sun. The one is like the self-effulgent sun in all its glory, never affected by any changes—terrestrial or atmospheric. The sun is not changed. Although the clouds may cover the sun he is in his own glory, his self-effulgence is not disturbed because human eyes cannot see him on a rainy day; but he is in his own self-effulgence all the time. Similarly, the absolute self-effulgent Being is in the cave of our hearts in all glory. We may not know it; we may not see it. We may live under the cloud of ignorance and superstition and doubts and all kinds of misunderstanding, but still that does not affect the absolute substance, the Reality. The other is the image, reflection. And the ego is the reflection. The ego is the one who knows that you are sitting here and I am talking. This is ego. It has nothing to do with the body, but it is working through the body and the senses; it is conscious of

१ । अतः पिबन्तो दुहन्तस्य लोके

गुहां प्रविष्टौ परमे परार्धे ।

आपातयौ ब्रह्मविदो व्यन्ति

पञ्चगव्यो ये च मित्राधिकेताः ॥

—Katha-Upanishad, 1. 3. 1.

everything connected with the body. The doer, thinker or enjoyer reaps the results of all the thoughts and deeds; but the other remains like a witness. It is never changed by the changes of the body or senses or mental conditions. It is always above all mental conditions. Your mind may be covered with a cloud of anger or hatred or love or passion, but that witnesslike something is above it; it is not affected. The ego thinks I am angry, I have hatred, I am loving, I am passionate, I have this desire. The ego thinks of all these things, but the witnesslike Reality within us is not affected by the changes. These thoughts and feelings come like clouds and the absolute Reality remains like the sun.

And this revelation of relation between the image and the Reality is most wonderful. Why is it called an image? You know the reflection of the sun cannot exist if there be no sun. The existence of the reflection is not an independent existence. It depends upon the existence of the sun. So, the existence of the ego is not an independent existence, but it depends upon that witness-like, self-effulgent sun. Therefore, they give that illustration of an image. The image of a thing depends upon the thing itself. The face which you see in a mirror cannot exist by itself if it were not dependent upon your face. You may have a photograph—the photograph may stand out, but the photograph of a face has no independent existence, because it depends upon the existence of the human face which is the reality. If that photograph

thinks that it exists all by itself and it never depended upon any human face, then it would be foolish; it would not be correct. And, therefore, if an ego thinks that it exists independent of that witnesslike Reality, the absolute Truth, then it would be foolish.

Here is a beautiful illustration, which is very old, and at the same time, which is very helpful, the illustration of a chariot. This is an old illustration: the body is like a chariot. Those who have read Plato's philosophy will remember this familiar illustration. Plato got it from the East, from India. The *Atman*, or the true Self, is to be known as the rider, sitting on a chariot. The chariot is the gross physical body; intellect is the charioteer and the mind the reins. The senses may be compared to horses, and the objects of the senses are the roads. Now you see the five senses: eye, ear, nose, power of taste and touch, all these are the principal senses. Of course, these may be sub-divided into many others, but these are the principal ones. Now these are the horses, and the objects of the senses are the roads that the horses are travelling on, the body is the chariot, mind is the reins. Who holds these horses? The charioteer, intellect; and who is the rider? The Soul. So you see the Soul is the witnesslike (*Sâksi*) thing beyond intellect, beyond mind, beyond sense perception. Having given that illustration, the Ruler of Death says: When the highest spirit is in union with the body, the senses, the mind, then the wise man calls him the enjoyer. Where is the ego then?

The ego is that state in which the highest, the rider, is connected with and closely related to the intellect, mind and sense powers. So ego is the one who has the sense powers, who has mind and mental functions, intellect and intellectual functions, and this witnesslike Spirit (*Atman*) is connected with it. That is the ego. It is just like a bundle of all these things. If you separate them, that which is ego appears to be nothing but a reflection, and as the reflection cannot exist unless there is something upon which it is reflected, so the ego cannot exist if there be no mind, no intellect, no sense power. So long as these exist there is the ego, and he is the enjoyer, he is the thinker.

Now, you can analyze in your own self and find out where is the ego, and where is the witnesslike something which is the Absolute? We often hear of the divine spark within us, but that divine spark is the witness, it is the source of intelligence, it is the background of the ego; it is the essence of our being. So, when we understand that, we understand our ego and the witnesslike Reality, the absolute Being, the divine spark within us; then we understand the relation, and then we know that after death this ego will continue to exist. The sense powers we will have, the mind we will retain and intellect will be with us after the body is dead and gone. The body is nothing but a machine. It is an instrument which this ego has manufactured and kept up in order to gain experience, fulfil certain



desires and to build up the character. And the end of all these experiences will come when the ego has realized its relation with the Absolute, with that divine Being. Then everything will be accomplished and perfection will be reached. Until then we will have to go on struggling, reaping the results of our thoughts and deeds and gaining experience after experience so that we can know exactly what this world is made up of, what the purpose of life is and where is the goal; and when we have come to know of the goal and realized it the purpose of evolution is then finished and we attain to absolute immortality, eternal peace and unending bliss.

## CHAPTER VII

### EGO AND THE TRUE SELF

We are confronted with various burning questions whenever we try to study the mystery of death. What is the true nature of our being? What is soul life? Is the soul life eternal or not? What is the relation of the ego to the universe? What is ego and true self? These are some of the most important questions that face us in our pursuit of the mystery of death. A right solution of these vital questions gives us knowledge about what happens after death. And, therefore, Yama, the Ruler of Death, said while describing the relation of the individual ego to God: "Two have entered into the cave of the heart, dwelling on the summit of the spiritual space."<sup>1</sup> The seers of Truth say, the one is like the self-effulgent sun, the other is like his image or reflection; the one is like the witness while the other eats the fruits of its own thoughts and deeds. It is tremendously difficult to clearly grasp this vital point. Many thinking minds have often been deluded in trying to grasp this most subtle subject. You will find the philosophers vary and the scientists disagree in trying to explain the nature of the soul, the nature of God

१। अतं विष्णौ सुकुल्य लोके,

गुहां प्रविष्टौ परमे पराबद्धौ ।

—Katha-Upanishad, 1. 3. 1.

etc., The religions try to explain the true nature of God, but there have been a bewildering diversity of opinions on the issue. The idea which is common to Christianity is that God created man in His own image. The Christians learn this lesson in their childhood from the Sunday Schools, and they cherish it even when they are grown up. But it is to be regretted that such minds as can grasp the real meaning of the term *image* are very rare. It is said that man is created in the image of God. Here 'man' stands for all human beings. The reference is not to the human body, because the human body is not always perfect and, in fact, it has a great many limitations. So, if the imperfect human body were created in the image of God, then God also must share all those imperfections in common with the creation. The image is a reflection of the original. It is for this and various other reasons we cannot think that the human form alone is referred to by the word '*image*'. On the contrary, the word 'image' refers to the 'ego' or the 'soul'. Now many people do not believe in the existence of the soul. Are they not created in the image of God? Yes, they are, but they do not know it. Their non-knowledge does not prove its non-existence. You may not believe in your own existence as a soul, as an entity, but still you are the image of God. This is the most wonderful idea we get from this verse which I have just explained to you.

The Vedânta explains the image of God in its most

spiritual sense, and not in its material sense. The Western minds are often frightfully literal—that is, they try to understand very literally that if man be the image of God, then God must be just like a human being. They jump to that unwarranted conclusion from that analogy. I do not blame them because they are just like children in spiritual life. They cannot grasp the nature of their soul nor they ever cared for it, but if you tell them that God created man in His own image, then that God must be like a man—masculine—with two hands, a huge Being sitting on a throne, and we are all His image. But that idea is very gross, and the quality that we attribute to God is shockingly crude. We give God a human form only to limit his limitless existence. Such anthropomorphic conception represents the first stage of man's progress to spiritual life. At this stage we think of God as a human being and we try to explain everything in human terms, although the qualities and the attributes which we give Him are infinitely magnified than the ordinary qualities of ordinary mortals; but nevertheless, He is human, he is personal, he is limited by a form. And in studying the Jewish scriptures, the Old Testament, you will find the conception of God which Moses and all the Elders had was a human conception and we need not blame the Christians of to-day who still believe in that kind of a personal God with human attributes and a human form because they are brought up with that idea. But when we

try to understand the true meaning of the passage that God created man in His own image, we find great difficulties. The students of Vedânta can easily grasp the meaning because they do not think of a human God when they try to explain the word *image*. The ego, the individual soul, is the image of God, who is the *Spirit*. He is the universal spirit. He is like the self-effulgent sun, and each individual soul is like a reflection of the sun on the mirror of the intellect. As the reflection cannot exist without being related to the object of reflection, so the individual soul cannot exist without being closely related to the Being, the Spirit, whose reflection it is. Now, if you hold a mirror in the sun you will see the reflection, but that reflection would be impossible if there were no sun or if the sun were covered by dense clouds. So the reflection is only possible when there is sun overhead and if we are the reflections or images of God, then we must be of similar nature, because the reflection of the sun cannot be square or triangular but round, self-effulgent and bright, and that is our true nature if we are created in the image of God. If we are created in the image of God, then we are bright and we are spirits. But where is that self-effulgent sun, the Being, God, whose reflections the individual souls are? He is not very far from us; He is within us, around us, though He is not visible to the eyes. No sense powers can reveal His presence. The materialistic thinkers and scientists try to understand God through sense powers,

and when they fail, they deny His existence, but they never think for a moment that the sense powers exist in and through God and cannot reveal God. The individual souls, also, cannot be revealed by sense powers. Only the manifestation of certain activities can be perceived by the senses and that is all. You cannot tell whether there is a soul in another person or not, but you can imagine that that person is living when he moves, talks or does certain things. You can guess and infer, by observing certain acts, but the reality, the real nature, is always imperceptible by our senses. The egos cannot be perceived by our senses if they do not assume certain forms. And now we have understood the relation between God and the individual ego. *God himself is sexless. He is both father and mother of the universe, and if He is sexless, the individual soul is also sexless.* There are some sects who believe in the sex of souls. The Swedenborgians believe in the sex of souls. They hold that the males will remain males forever, and females will remain females forever. That idea is very limited. It does not go far enough. At first the idea seems to be correct, but when you go a little deeper into your true nature you find that sex conditions are more or less related to the body and the mind, but not to the soul. The soul is higher than sex. There is no masculine soul, and no feminine soul—they are all children of God.

The individual soul is to be considered as a nexus, the connecting-link between the world of senses

and the realm of the Absolute. It is like a bridge. If we wish to go to the realm of the Absolute, we must go over that bridge and, therefore, the individual soul or ego is called the *mediator*—the bridge. The Christians call it Christ. Christ means the individual soul, the ego which is the mediator, which connects the phenomenal world with the Absolute. We cannot go to the realm of Divinity by any other way except over the bridge of our souls. So, if you wish to know God, first know yourself. That is the surest way. If you wish to know Christ, know yourself and there you will find Christ. Christ does not mean any ordinary human being; it refers to the child of God. We are all children of God, and when we will realize that truth, we will realize Christ. The historical Christ is limited by time and place, but the spiritual Christ is above time and place and eternal by nature. The spiritual Christ dwells in every individual soul from the beginningless past and it is the real Christ. He is the mediator, and he signifies the individual soul in man. The soul is eternal, and it is also immortal. But we cannot attain to immortality unless we have gone over the bridge of our own souls which alone can lead us to the abode of immortality. Let us now understand the nature of this bridge, the mediator between mortal and immortal.

We can grasp the nature of our soul only by means of analysis, by studying our own self and by understanding our own being. None can give us that supreme knowledge. External teachers may

give you certain suggestions, but in the last resort it is up to you to work out your salvation. Each individual must find out for himself where the soul is and what it is like. It is the most difficult task, yet it must be courageously undertaken. It is difficult when we are lazy or living on the sense plane when we try to delude ourselves by false thinking. So long as we are sleeping in self-delusion, it is difficult to get it. But if we are awakened, if we have a genuine longing for the Truth, to realize God, it is easy of achievement. Those people who say: "Oh, we are so busy, we have to do so many things, and we have no time to think of ourselves, to think of God," are deluding themselves and wasting their energy fruitlessly. They are only working for their bread and butter and a little sense pleasure. After hard labour they retire to bed and wake up to labour again. And this round of work and sleep, eating and drinking, is going on time and again. There is no rest. They neglect their own selves. They do not open their eyes and do not know anything beyond certain limit. And see how they are living, and what they are doing. A man who has sense, who has understanding, will pity these souls as to what they are doing, what they are trying to accomplish and how foolish they are to waste their time and energy for nothing, for things which do not amount to anything, do not bring any consolation, happiness, and knowledge of our self, our own being, and our relation to God. It does not explain to us how



we are going to gain immortality nor does it tell us whether we are at all capable of immortality. But we have no time to seriously discuss these vital issues. Sad it is to think and to live under such degrading conditions.

In order to analyse ourselves and to find out the relation between the senses, mind, intellect and our ownselves, the egos, we must make a picture, and here the Ruler of Death gives an illustration which may help the seekers after Truth. That illustration is as follows:

“Consider this body to be like a chariot. Think of your body as like a chariot. The rider is the soul; the horses are the senses i.e. the sense organs and sense powers are the horses. The driver is the intellect, and the mind is the reins. The objects of the senses are the roads where these horses are travelling or running. Now, make a picture of that in your mind that you are a chariot, but your true self is the rider, and the horses are the sense powers going in different directions. Then you will be able to understand the relation between the senses, sense powers, mind, intellect and your conscious ego; how they exist and what relations they bear to each other.”

२ । आत्मानं रयिनं विद्धि शरीरं रथमेव तु ।  
 बुद्धिन्तु सारथिं विद्धि मनः प्रग्रहमेव च ॥  
 इन्द्रियाणि हयानाहुर्विषयास्तोषु गोचरान् ।  
 आत्मेन्द्रियमनोयुक्तं भोक्तृत्वाहुर्मनीषिणः ॥

—Katha-Upanishad, 1.3.3-4.

Cf. Swāmi Abhedānanda: **India and Her People**, (1905-6), pp. 223-224.

Now, if the rider be our true Self which is called in Sanskrit the *Atman*, the eternal and immortal part of our own self and the primemover of our thoughts and actions, then the rider itself is above and beyond all imperfections. It is not affected by the sensation of pleasure or pain, but the ego is affected. The thinker, the doer, the knower of pain is not the true Self, but it is the thinking man, eating man, drinking man, planning man and working man. It is the ego which is imbued with I-consciousness. But behind this ego you will find the rider, the true Self. This ego is a combination of the true Self, the intellect, the mind and sense powers. It is all combined. When all these different powers are fused into a whole, that whole is the ordinary ego. The ordinary man or ordinary woman who thinks I am the son or daughter of Mr. So-and-so, I have my children, my family, or my work to do, is the mortal ego. But the mortal man is really an immortal entity, or it can be said that the immortal entity forms the background of the mortal man or ego who thinks and feels. Now, in this chariot the driver is responsible for all the good and evil that is done, or that is received. If the driver be not careful, the horses will drag the chariot down into the ditch. The horses are very powerful. The horses will become unruly if the driver be not strong. If the driver does not know how to manage all these horses, the ego will suffer. On the contrary if the driver knows the right path and the right way by which he can manage the horses, there will be no suffer-

ing, no doubt, no sorrow. A man who is dull of understanding, and whose mind is unbridled, cannot naturally control the horses or his senses. Now, you see the ordinary person who is living on the sense plane, and who is under the influence of sense powers, cannot control the horses because the driver is not strong, has not proper understanding, and adequate self-control, with the result that the horses get the upperhand and drag the driver, willing or unwilling, in any direction they desire.

You will find the vast majority of men having no control over their horses. You will find many people standing on the sidewalk looking at the shop windows attracted by certain things, and immediately they want to possess those things and go to buy. If they have no money, they will lift those things and go to jail, and all kinds of troubles will come afterwards. You see that is the attraction, the power of seeing, the sight of a thing produces such an impression, and the driver did not possess understanding and self-control, consequently they went into the ditch, i.e., went into jail and suffered terribly. All kinds of robbery, theft, murder and other crimes are committed by those who have no right understanding and self-control; but if such a person had a little self-control and would have exercised proper reasoning in dissuading him from the mad pursuit of the object of allurements, he could have avoided many troubles and pains. He who has right understanding and whose mind is always

firmly held, holds all the horses together. If you do not pay any attention to a thing, or if you do not allow yourself to be distracted by it, it does not affect you in the least. That driver holds the reins of the power of attention. And he whose mind is always firmly held, has his senses under control like good horses of a charioteer. The horses obey such a driver. And you see just as in ordinary driving, if the horse knows that the driver is not strong, the horse will take his own course. So it is with us in our chariot—the horses of the senses, when they find the driver is not firm, the rein is not tight, they go astray and do whatever they please and drag the rider also, and bring all kinds of trouble and suffering. Therefore, everyone of us should remember this illustration. It is very helpful, and whenever you are overpowered by some attraction just remember this illustration. If you can hold the reins of the mind firmly, use the power of discrimination and understanding properly, you will have no trouble, no matter where you go in the wide world.

He who has no power of discrimination, who is always unmindful and impure, never reaches perfection but remains in the world of imperfection. Here is another thing to be considered that if we are not mindful of our ownself, of our own duties, and if we are impure in our thoughts and ideas, we cannot attain to perfection. In order to achieve perfection we must first of all purify our own selves, purify our minds, purify

our senses, exercise self-control and use discrimination. Understand the laws—moral, mental physical and spiritual properly and live up to those laws.

Most people are devoid of discrimination. Discrimination is a thing which they do not know what it is like. If you discriminate between what is right and what is wrong, you can get rid of lots of trouble. Right discrimination is the highest guide in this world. A man who lacks discrimination lives quite naturally in the darkness of ignorance and suffers consequently endless pains and miseries in life.

If you walk on the street on a cold morning and do not know where there is ice, and if you just look up at the clouds or shut your eyes and step over stones or rocks or slippery ground, you are bound to fall and suffer, and break your neck. You will have to exercise the power of attention and discrimination. Of these two things you must not be unmindful in your works, in your daily life, in your duties, and at the same time you must use discrimination and pure thoughts, and pure ideas must be held as pure friends. Impure thoughts and impure ideas will lead us into misery. Impure thoughts are never helpful and in order to purify our mind and our inner nature we must cherish holy thoughts in our mind. Everything that is uplifting, everything that is beneficial to mankind, everything that makes us unselfish, *everything that makes us forget ourselves, everything that helps us in cultivating*

*conscious self-denial, is the ideal of life. Every time we deny ourselves we grow richer. The more we give, the more we receive. This one thing we must learn—every time we deny ourselves, that is, we want certain things and if we find we can get along without that thing, and give that energy or that thing to some other person whose need is greater than ours, that is denying ourselves. Instead of trying to grab everything from everybody else, instead of having that feeling of possession cheating others, robbing others of their legitimate dues and instead of holding such impure thoughts we must hold thoughts of truthfulness—that we should never cheat anybody. No matter how often we may be cheated or robbed we should never cheat others. Make that firm resolution that you shall never do any wrong to anybody no matter how you may be injured or hurt or robbed, and that would be your principle under all conditions. If you starve, you should not sacrifice your principle, but rather sacrifice your body than your principle. That kind of firmness is necessary. If you teach your children such ideas, when they grow up they will be Christlike. On the contrary, if you teach them how to cheat and rob, they will be murderers in the end, they will be criminals, and they will fill the state asylums and the state prisons. Why do we have so many murderers in this country? Because they are not trained from their childhood in this way to deny themselves, but they follow the*

vulgar ideals which ask them to flourish materially at the other man's expense by means, fair or foul. Do you not see how mean is the idea of those robbers? How shrewd they are, these businessmen who rob others; how shrewd their idea is. They are very keen and at the same time they are extremely mischievous and wicked. They have directed their keen ideas in that wrong channel of injuring others and enriching themselves; but if they turned those ideas towards helping others and denying themselves, they would be godly. There would be no need of police; there would be no need of state laws if the individuals lived in this way, and if they trained their children, trained others to live in the same way.

He who has right knowledge, who has self-control and who is pure, reaches perfection and lasting bliss. Now you see these are the conditions of reaching perfection. First of all we must have right knowledge, right discrimination between the eternal and non-eternal, the spirit and matter, the soul and the body, and the right and wrong. All these things we must know *as they are in reality*. If we have that knowledge, if we can distinguish the soul from the body, the spirit from matter, the right from wrong, then, with the help of that knowledge we can attain to perfection. At the same time we must have self-control, hold the reins of the sense in check and we must not allow the horses to drag us into the ditch of despair, sorrow, suffering and misery. Exercise

self-control at every moment of your life. If any passion arises, deny it instead of encouraging it. Deny all the passions; say: "I have no passion, I am the highest". Every time anything attracts you deny it. Try self-denial and you will find that you have risen above the level of ordinary mortals. What can be more practical than this? We can practise this at all time; when we are alone, or when we are with our friends and relatives, we can practise self-denial, and we shall find that everybody will appreciate it in the end. Those who deny themselves in social life are always respected and honoured.

The greatest philanthropists are those who denied themselves. That is the sure way to prosperity, godliness, righteousness, and spirituality; and in the end with the help of that self-control and right knowledge we shall be able to reach perfection. Then we shall know what is meant by perfection. We cherish at present queer ideas about it. We think that perfection means a kind of heaven where we get all kinds of enjoyment without suffering and misery. That is the idea which the ordinary people cherish, but that is a wrong conception. Heavenly bliss is not equivalent to the state of perfection. Very few people know what is meant by perfection. *Perfection means a state in which all your senses and passions are under control and you are the absolute master of your own self.* Perfection does not mean a realm, but a state of existence, a level of enlarged consciousness where we come in tune



*with the Infinite.* Christ had attained to that state and therefore He was perfect. Omniscience will mark that stage. In the state of perfection your past, present and future will be equally revealed to you in their fullness. Everything will then be open to you. You will then understand all the laws gross or subtle, that govern physical, mental and spiritual planes. You will then understand your true nature and its relation to the infinite Being. All vital questions like the nature of the infinite Being its source and history, the roots of all phenomena will be solved at that stage. We are capable of that great achievement. That should be our ideal, and no eating, drinking and making money. Three conditions are essential for achieving the highest end in life. *These are self-control, self-denial and right knowledge.* Any man who possesses these three will attain to the highest goal of all religions. Whether you believe in a God or not, you will attain to God, which signifies perfection, through these, even if you simply possess these three great qualities. *Belief in a God is not necessary for salvation. Belief is an accompaniment of right knowledge.* Knowledge and belief spring simultaneously. Blind faith does not help us in any way. Only that belief is helpful which is fed and kindled by right knowledge and discrimination. That faith once acquired is unshakable. It cannot be changed, it is indestructible.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### EGO, SELF AND SENSATION

The most important thing in the study of Vedânta philosophy is to know the real nature of the self, the individual ego, the soul. When we have known this, when we have known our true selves, we have known everything. This may sound very curious that by knowing ourselves we know everything. Perhaps you remember that most ancient saying: "What is the highest wisdom? *Know Thyself.*" The knowledge of our true Self is the highest wisdom. Why is it the highest? Because by knowing one's self, one can realize the true nature of the universe, the true nature of God, the true nature of everything.

For the Western people it is the most difficult thing to understand. Those who are brought up with the dualistic idea that God and individual souls and the world are separate entities, cannot grasp this point at all. They generally think that by knowing one's own individual self one can get only a partial knowledge of the universe, because the individual self is distinct and separate from the external universe, and also from God. This idea is very prominent amongst the dualistic religions. In Christianity, in Judaism, you will find this idea very prominent—that God is separate from the universe, that we are separate from God, and

separate from the universe. There is a wide gulf of separation between man and God in Christianity, in Judaism, and the gulf was bridged over by the conception of the Son of God, the *Logos* in Christianity. But in studying Vedânta we go beyond this conception.

Vedânta helps us to go beyond that conception that we are separate from God, that God is distinct and separate from the universe. In Vedânta we find a deeper, more helpful and more uplifting conception that God is not very far from us, that the Reality of the universe is not entirely separate from us, but dwelling within us. We learn from Vedânta that He is the foundation of our individual existence.

Upon this conception is based the whole philosophy and religion of Vedânta, and there the student of Vedânta have a greater advantage. They do not have to go through so many theories and so many doctrines and dogmas in order to solve the problems which disturb the minds of men. They can easily solve all these problems by that central idea that God dwells in the universe and in all of us. He is not very far away from us but nearest to our being. He is the very essence of our existence, our true Self.

Having understood the point that God pervades the universe and us all, and that He is the Soul of our souls, the Life of our life, if we start in our search after God within us, we will find "Know Thyself" is the answer to that question.

When we use such expressions as "Know Thyself",

we do not mean merely the physical self, or merely the external\*personality, or the human self, but we mean something different, something deeper than that. Our human self is only the externalized manifestation of a higher Self, which is called in Sanskrit *Atman*. It is distinguishable from the human self or Anglo-Saxon self which grows and moves and thinks. But in fact there is something behind the thinker. Ordinarily, we cannot go beyond our thoughts, beyond the conception of a thinker, but suppose you come to a moment when you do not think, when your thoughts do not disturb you, what happens to you then? All thoughts are quiet, all passions are silenced, all desires are latent, what happens then? Have you ever asked that question? That is the time when you go beyond thoughts, but still you do not lose your existence. You exist as an entity full of calmness, full of of repose, full of consciousness. But very few people who are living a busy life, and constantly rushing from one thing to another, can grasp this idea, can understand what happens at that time when thoughts, passions or desires do not disturb us. That is the point where we can find our true Self if we turn the light of knowledge, just like a searchlight, towards our Self, the higher Self. Then we can learn what our true Self is and what God is like.

You may search for God outside in the external world, go to Palestine, go to the mountains, go to the holy places or to sacred temples, but you will not find God anywhere. If you have not found

Him within yourself, if you have not known what you are in reality and what your true Self is, you cannot discover God. Vedānta philosophy imparts to mankind that supreme knowledge and the whole world is deeply in debt to it. In India alone you will find such teachers who can teach the means to that divine knowledge. India has always stood for this knowledge, and that is the one point, the one thing which is a special object of study for all nations and which India has always taught. It is she who has always been the teacher of other nations in this spiritual line.

By knowing our Self, we know God, and by knowing our Self we know the external world too. How do we know the external world? You may think that modern science helps us in studying the external world. How far will science take you in your studies? How far will science help you in knowing the external world? Not beyond sense perceptions. The moment you try to get beyond sense perceptions you transcend the realm of science. Conversely, if you cannot transcend that realm, you can not go beyond the empirical knowledge. Science will give some theories, some hypothesis. And how do you know those theories are true? By inference. Then you come to the psychological stage through external science like physics, chemistry etc. There is the beginning of the psychological stage. Psychological science will lead us beyond the science of the external world, and in trying to know our Self we must learn to analyse our perceptions.

The analysis of our sense perceptions and of our mental conditions and of our states of consciousness will help us in entering into our innermost *being* and realizing our true Self as well as Divinity which is dwelling within us.

In order to analyse we will have to start with our sense objects and the gross material body. Now we possess five senses of perception and knowledge: the senses of seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling and touching. These five are the doors through which our individual egos come in contact with the external world. Now, how are you going to analyse these perceptions? Here we need the study of physiology and psychology. In trying to analyse our perceptions, we will first start with the external objects of sense. The senses are the gates through which we receive the vibrations of the external objects. Now, we see different colours of objects. What happens when we see a colour? There comes certain vibrations of ether in contact with our eye-balls, and through the eye-balls they are focussed, and they produce an inverted image on the retina. We are not conscious of that inverted image, but that inverted image of a thing, whether of a chair or table, produces a certain change and vibration in the optic nerves. That vibration is carried into the brain cells. Molecular changes take place in those cells, and that vibration again of the brain-cell is translated by ego, or by the mind, or by an intelligent something, into sensations. If they are not translated into sensations by a conscious entity,

they would remain only vibrations, and not become sensations. Then those sensations will be made into percepts, and then another mental process will go on and that will convert, or transform those percepts into concepts. Now, this thing is constantly going on. First, we receive vibrations from external objects. Those vibrations are changed into sensations, and those sensations produce percepts, and percepts are turned into concepts.

Now, if you close your eyes and think of a chair, you make a mental picture of that chair. Now that is a *concept*. You have the form or concept of a chair, and whenever you see anything like a chair you compare it with that concept in your mind which is pigeonholed, and then if you find that it is similar to your concept you call it a chair. If it be dissimilar, you call it by some other name. And this is what we are doing all the time.

You hear a sound. Sound is nothing but vibration of air that enters through our ears, touches the organ of hearing, and that produces a vibration in the auditory nerves, and that molecular vibration is carried to the brain-cells and produces another kind of molecular change. That again produces a percept, and this percept is transformed or converted into a concept by an intelligent mind.

If the intelligent mind does not exist, these vibrations may enter into the organs but will produce no sensations, just as in a dead body the organs may remain perfect and vibrations of air or of

ether may touch the organs, may produce certain molecular changes in the brain cells, but they will not produce sensations. Now, this kind of analysis is necessary to understand our true Self. And when we are aware of this deep point and when we try to trace the cause of a sensation we feel that this object has produced that sensation, and, therefore, we call that object the cause of our sensation, or the cause of our perception. That is another mental process; the mind tries to trace the cause. It is not the sense organs that try to trace the cause of a sensation, but it is the intelligent mind that tries to trace the cause. Then we project our concept outside ourself and we think that something has produced this sensation, and therefore we say that a chair is like a chair.

But we have never seen a chair. We cannot see the external chair. We can only become conscious of that sensation. The molecular action which is transformed into sensation, that is all we can be conscious of.

Now comes the question: Which is higher, which is finer? And here the Ruler of Death explains the process of analysis. In studying Vedânta you require at every step critical analysis as well as creative synthesis, for Vedânta is not merely a science of the self but also its philosophy. Then you will be able to grasp everything.

With reference to this the Vedânta says: "Finer than the sense organs are the sensations. Mind is beyond sensations. Beyond the mind is the



intellect. Greater than the intellect is the cosmic ego. Beyond the cosmic ego is the unmanifested One, and beyond the unmanifested is the highest Spirit, beyond which there can be nothing greater or higher. This is the goal; this is the highest path which reaches to perfection.”<sup>1</sup>

I have just explained to you that the sense organs are the grossest instruments through which we see the vibrations, and those vibrations are changed into sensations. Therefore, sensations are something which are finer than the gross sense organs. The objects of sense in the external world are grosser than our sense organs, than our senses. That which determines is higher than that which is determined. The sound or colour cannot be higher than the sense of hearing or sense of seeing which reveals and enlightens the sound and colour, because a determinant is necessarily higher than the object to be determined. By the sense powers we know the objects of senses; therefore, the sense powers are higher than the objects of senses; for, the sense powers or sense organs are grosser than sensations or sensations are much finer than these gross instruments.

Finer than sensations is the mind. What does mind mean? Mind means here attention, power

१ । इन्द्रियेभ्यः परा ह्यर्था अर्थेभ्यश्च परं मनः ।

मनसस्तु परा बुद्धिर्वेदे रात्मा महान् परः ॥

महतः परमव्यक्तमव्यक्तात् पुरुषः परः ।

पुरुषात् परं किञ्चित् सा काष्ठा सा परा गतिः ॥

—Katha-Upanishad, III. 11.

of attention. Now, if your ego is inattentive when a sensation is produced, you cannot be aware of that sensation. You are just now sitting here and listening to me. Send your mind to your home, and you will not hear what I am saying, will not understand anything about it. If you are inattentive just for a second you will miss certain words. Those vibrations of air (words are nothing but vibrations of air) will enter your ears and will produce changes in the auditory nerves and molecular changes in the brain cells. The vibrations will be changed into sensations, but you will not be conscious of them because you are not attentive. Therefore, attention reveals the sensation, and therefore it is higher. That power of attention is higher than sensations. The very fact of becoming conscious of a sensation means or presupposes the support of close attention. Without attention you cannot perceive any object or any sensation. Even the power of attention is not enough. You will have to determine whether a sensation is of heat or of cold, or of light, or of pain or pleasure. Who will do that? The power of attention is incapable of it. We require still another faculty, which is called the power of determination. That is called *buddhi* in Sanskrit.

After receiving a sensation we abstract the sensation, and when it is abstracted, it is called *percept*. When it is still more abstracted and made a picture of, it is called a *concept*. Who makes that concept? It is the power of determination. You hear a sound. Whether it is the sound of a bugle,

or of a steam engine, or of a drum—who is going to distinguish this? For it the power of attention would not be enough. The moment we hear a sound, the mind works, the intellect works and all those concepts of sound which we have in our mind are pigeonholed. The power of intellect brings them out through the power of memory, and compares this sound with the concepts of other sounds that we have heard, and then it says: “No, this sound seems to be like the sound of an engine, or a musical note. This sound seems to be like that of a drum.” If you are sitting in your own room and are listening to some kind of noise in the street, how do you determine what kind of noise it is. By referring back to the former concepts of sensations which you have in your mind. And who does that? It is the intellect or the determinative faculty which determines by comparing; and by right comparison when it determines properly, you know that it is such and such a sound.

This psychological process or analysis is done very quickly. It can be done in  $1/1000$ th of a second, or in  $1/1,000,000$ th of a second. The mind is very quick, and these concepts which are created by the power of the determinative faculty are kept in the mind.

Then there comes another sense, that is still higher than the determinative faculty. What is that? That is the sense of *I*, *me*, and *mine*; that is the ego and that sense of *I* is absolutely necessary;

otherwise, these sensations may come and go, but they would not affect the individual ego unless there be a connection between the sensation and the one who experiences or feels the sensation. There may be sensations at every moment of our life. At every moment we are having sensations of some kind or other; but who is there to bind them together, to put a tie between the subject or the perceiver and the sensations or the perceptions? It is the ego, the sense of 'I' or I-consciousness. The moment we hear sound, we say that it is my sensation, and therefore, this sense of 'I' binds everything, all sensations, perceptions, concepts, feelings. Feelings of pleasure or pain is higher than that of the faculties which are just described. There may be a pain in your body, but if you have no sense that this pain is yours, it would be like the pain of somebody else. You would have nothing to do with it. You would not suffer from it. If you can cut off this connection between a sensation of pain for instance, and the perceiver, then you have no feeling of pain. That would be the true meaning of a Christian Scientist that there is no such thing as pain, because you have cut your connection by denying yourself. But the Christian Scientists of today do not do that. They do not understand psychology, and that is the capital defect in their study. But in India you will find their historical prototypes only with superior knowledge and larger vision. They are called 'Vedântists', and they have learnt from Vedânta that they can avoid pain by cutting off their connection with

their body. Your finger or toe may ache, and if you cut off your sensation from yourself, you do not feel it. If you can think of yourself as something different, or separate from the body, or fix your attention on something different, you do not at all feel the pain. If we can cut off all connections with various sensations that we are receiving through our sense organs, the external world will vanish, will not exist in relation to us. Why? Because the external world exists so long as there is the connection between the external world and our sense of '*I*' through the medium of sensations and this sense of '*I*' makes us individual entities, makes up our personalities which we call *ego*.

Each individual ego is an individual centre which calls itself '*I*'. Anything related to that centre is mine; anything referring to the centre is *me* or *mine*. This thought rises in the ego, and we cannot think of anything apart from the sense of '*I*' which is the centre of our individual existence. That is the reason why we do not take any interest in anything which is not related to *I*-consciousness or the sense of *I*, *me* or *mine*. This is true of all men and women, nay, of all beings.

Self-study in this light means we have studied all individual human beings. Everyone is doing the same thing. If you know your own ego, you have known the ego of others, whether human or non-human, because in all living creatures there is an ego, the sensation of '*I*'. Take the case of a dog for instance, it knows what its earthly existence is.

Either directly or indirectly it is conscious of itself and it feels pleasure or pain. It suffers and enjoys. And that is done by the individual ego of that dog. Wherever there is any expression of consciousness, intelligence, there is this sense of 'I'. Even in the vegetable kingdom there is a slight manifestation of the sense of 'I' and, therefore, the great thinkers of the world have called the sense of 'I' in vegetable, vegetable souls. Vegetables have souls—souls not of the same degree of manifestation as that of the human souls. The difference is only in degree. They have less manifestation than in lower animals, than in a minute animalcule which moves. It is within the very grossest or lowest kind of consciousness, or sense of 'I'. It is very faint, more like the consciousness in a dream state, or perhaps we may call it a subconscious sense of 'I'.

Now, here we find our relation with the universe. Having understood our own individual ego, and having also realized that all individual egos are of similar nature and they all mean the centre of *I, we* and *mine*, we begin to trace our relation to this universe. How can you do it? Now, take all the individual egos of this world from the highest human being to the lowest vegetables, and take them in their totality collectively. This individual sense of 'I' when taken collectively will be composed of millions and millions of sense of 'I'. That would be the cosmic ego. That cosmic ego is higher than our individual egos, because each individual sense of 'I' means a portion of this col-

lective sense of 'I'. If you can close your eyes and withdraw your mind from the external world and think of this one sense of 'I' manifesting through countless individual entities, some of which are human while some others are animal and vegetable, how big that idea will be. It will be like one universal whole of which we are but parts. Each individual sense of 'I' will be then a part of this cosmic I, or cosmic ego. Now what is this cosmic ego? You see how from an individual we are going to the universal. By studying the individual self we are studying everybody. Unless you know yourself, you cannot know the self of others. When I lift my hand or move it, how do you know it? Because you do the same—by referring to your own self. When anybody feels pain and you sympathize with that person, how do you sympathize? By putting yourself into that person's condition. That is all you do. If you were hurt in that way, you would suffer pain. If anybody is crying or suffering, how do you know? If you put yourself in their thoughts and conditions you would do the same. Of course, you cannot act it in the same way, because you are not conscious of the psychological process; but even unconsciously, or subconsciously you put yourself in their thoughts and conditions, or remember something of a shocking nature which happened to yourself, and that is the way you sympathize with another person and try to relieve that pain; otherwise you would not do so. Thus if you analyse that feeling you will find that you can only sympathize with or

do anything for another by being conscious of what is going on in the mind of another only by referring to your own sensation, own perceptions, own feelings which you have in yourself. There is no other way of knowing it. How do you know that other people have souls? Because you yourself have a soul. How do you know that dogs have senses? Because you yourself have that kind of senses or you would do the same thing, or express yourself in a similar way under those conditions. And if we take these isolated individuals collectively, it means we have taken the whole universe. There may be beings in the distant planets, in the stars, and if there be a being of any kind that being also must have a sense of 'I', otherwise, it would not be a being. And wherever there is sense of 'I', that sense of 'I' must be of that nature. So we have taken the whole universe, and we have found our relation with the intelligent universe, not with dead matter. Dead matter is the grossest thing. We started with the object of the senses, but we have come to the realm of consciousness now. The sense of 'I', or the ego, that which says: "I am here", "I am sitting here", "I am talking", or "I am listening", or "I walk", "I go home", "I do this", "I have these duties", and so on and which is the thinker, doer, perceiver, cannot exist if there be no sense of 'I'.

There are different personalities. Some persons manifest a certain personality, and that personality may be cut off. The relation of that personality may be cut off from other personalities, but still



each personality has the sense of 'I' connected with it. There may be twenty different personalities in one human being but there can not be twenty different souls in him. There is only one soul, one ego, which expresses or puts on a different garment of thought-form and that makes a different personality. But the connection is not cut off from the individual ego. This sense of 'I' unites all the sensations and is the cause of individual identity. For instance, how do you know that you are the same person that you were yesterday? How do you know it? The sense of identity is caused by the ego. The sensations and perceptions which you had in the morning are pigeon-holed in your mind in the form of concepts and percepts. The sensations are gone, leaving the impression upon your mind substance. And who connects these impressions of various kinds? Who has combined them together if there be no one intelligent entity above all? The sensations cannot be our individual ego. They simply leave impressions on the mind substance, and it is the individual ego who reads them, translates them, combines them, mixes them and produces that close relation which is at the foundation of our sense of identity.

Now, we have come so far to the sense of 'I'. Here comes a difficult problem again. We will have to analyse this sense of 'I', and proceed further. That is not the end of all. We are going to the Absolute, to the ultimate Reality of the universe. The ego would be now the starting-point of our venture. It has nothing to do with the body, though

at present the sense of 'I' is deeply related to it. When you think of yourself, either as a man or a woman, whether young or old it is simply because of the sense of 'I' which you possess. But put that aside. Think of yourself as an entity. Of course, your body is connected with other different relations, and whatever relations may interfere with your sense of 'I' at present, they will be always meaningful only in relation to the body, or blood relations, or some other kind of relation. This sense of 'I' is not the ultimate Reality of the universe, but it is the manifestation, it is the starting-point or beginning of differentiation. The sense of 'I' produces the sense of 'not-I', or, in other words, the sense of the ego produces the sense of non-ego. That is the first differentiation of spirit and matter. When the cosmic ego, which is the one universal 'I', became conscious of itself there was the other side of it which was 'not-I' or the non-ego. If you think "*I am this*", it also means that "*I am not that*". Similarly, "*I am this body*" means "*I am not this chair*". The very sense of 'I' includes the sense of what 'I' am not, which is non-ego. Now this is the first differentiation. When the cosmic-ego became conscious of itself, that was the beginning of the existence of matter-differentiation. Now, this sense of 'I', or the ego, is a blending of two factors. The one is a changeable thing, the other is unchangeable. The changeable part is that which is progressing, which is subject to evolution. For instance, I am a child, then I am a young boy or a young girl, then I am a youth,

then I mature. I am a thinker, I am a doer, I am walking. Now here you will notice that in all these qualifications of this sense of 'I' there is a double quantity. Thinker is not the same as doer; doer is not the same as perceiver. But there is another part which is not changing, I am this, I am that, I am sitting, I am walking, I am reading; that something which is unchangeable, is a constant quantity. Now, therefore, it is a mixture of changeable and unchangeable something. What is this changeable something? That changeable something is the foundation of the phenomenal universe, of the body, or sense organs, of external objects, etc. It is called in modern science the *energy*. It is the source of evolution. The universe has come out into its present state by the process of evolutionary energy. What is meant by energy? Energy means forces in their latent state. All the external world is nothing but the manifestation of force and when that force does not exercise its power in any form but remains dormant, it is called *energy*.

Now such was the beginning of the universe. All matter is nothing but a certain state of force—force of attraction, repulsion, or electrical force. Even the minute particles of atoms are nothing but force centres. And all these are the manifestations of one eternal energy. Modern science has gone so far. If you read Herbert Spencer's books you will find that this energy is the beginning of the universe and this energy is indestructible eternal and one.

Now you will understand how one energy produces all kinds of forces—heat, light, motion, gravitation, electricity and such other things. All these are produced from one kind of energy, and that energy, again, is called by different names, according to the manifestations. That energy is called in Vedânta '*avyakta*'—unmanifested, undifferentiated, which modern science calls unknown and unknowable, the undifferentiated state of the phenomenal universe.

The body and sense organs, therefore, have come out of energy, live through it, and ultimately go back to it. That energy is subject to evolution, and it is behind our intellect or determinative faculty. It has produced intellect, mind and sense powers, because intellect, mind, thinking are nothing but the expression of energy, or parts of this cosmic energy. So the comic ego means cosmic energy *plus* something. There is no intelligence in energy. Knowing this, the point which cannot be determined by any other science except metaphysics how can we distinguish this intelligence from energy? How do you know there is such a thing as energy? By your intelligence. If you were not conscious of energy, the energy would not exist in relation to you. Energy means a state of consciousness. Take, for instance, coal. Coal possesses an energy. How do you know it? If you burn it it will produce a fire, it will create force and, therefore, it is in the energy-state of force. You can understand that force as form of energy only when your state of consciousness takes

that form. Therefore, energy is only one state of consciousness while matter is another. These are various states of consciousness. We cannot go beyond consciousness to know anything of the external world. All these sensations are states of consciousness, changes in consciousness. You have a feeling of heat—that is, your state of consciousness is that there is heat. When you have a feeling of cold, that is another state of consciousness. If you are not conscious of it, it does not exist in relation to you. If it does not produce any change in your conscious state, it does not exist. The moment it affects your state of consciousness then you shiver. It is cold. It is very warm. That means your sensation of heat or cold is a state of consciousness. You can know energy and force only in relation to your consciousness in some form or other.

Therefore, in our consciousness we find that this double quantity is produced by what is subject to change and evolution, that is, energy. And there is another portion. The intelligent portion is not a part of energy. Energy itself is not conscious of itself as energy, but it is something distinct and separate from energy, what knows that this is energy and this is not and what is beyond that undifferentiated energy. It is called *Purusha*, which means the principal Self, that is, the subject, the source of our consciousness. Consciousness is not produced by energy, but when the source of consciousness and energy come together, they produce the ego.

Therefore, the ego has two attributes. The changeable quality which comes out of the energy while the unchangeable proceeds from the true Self or the Reality of the universe or the Absolute. The Absolute is the basis of the universe. You cannot go beyond it, for it is the background of God *which is nothing but the cosmic ego. The cosmic ego and God are convertible terms. The personal God whom we worship is the cosmic ego, who sees through all eyes and hears through all ears. He is conscious of the whole Self, conscious of us all. Just as we are conscious of our little world, so God is conscious of the whole universe. As we govern and regulate our individual existence, so the cosmic existence is regulated and directed by the cosmic ego whom we worship as a personal God. Now, in studying yourself you come in touch with the personal God, and through the personal with the impersonal, which is called by different names.*

What is the difference between Over-soul and soul? The soul is the ego, and the Over-soul is the source of consciousness, the *Purusha*, the Absolute. It is not the same as energy, but it is the knower of energy, the source of consciousness and bliss. It is called in Vedânta *Brahman*. *Brahman* is the goal of the universe as also its foundation. Therefore it is said in the Vedas: "That from which the whole phenomenal universe has come into existence, in which it exists and into which it returns at the time of dissolution, know

that as the Reality, that is your true Self.”<sup>1</sup> When you have known that, all else will be revealed to your vision. Then you have understood the meaning of “*Know Thyself*”. Then you have understood how by knowing yourself you will know God and the universe. What will be the effect of that knowledge? That knowledge will make you omniscient immediately. The little consciousness, the little knowledge you receive through the senses would appear as ignorance, as darkness. This knowledge is not enough. As long as we do not know our ownself, we cannot know the essence of anything. Book-reading will not be of much use in that process. You can gather a few ideas which others have put there. But book-knowledge cannot enlighten our deeper being. It can give us at best certain suggestions and it is upto us to work out those suggestions in practice. Book-knowledge has never made a wise man or has brought a great spiritual insight. All knowledge comes from that one source which is the highest. Intellectual knowledge is nothing. It is only mixed with ignorance, mixed with limitations. It works within limits. What are these limitations? Limitations of your sense powers. For instance, if you are short-sighted, everything you perceive through that sense organ will be imperfect. Not a single individual is

१। “क्वो वा इमानि मृतानि जायन्ते, येन जातानि जीवन्ति,  
यत् प्रयन्तमिमस्मिन्विद्यन्ति तद्विजिज्ञासस्य तद् वाङ्मेति ॥

—Taittiriya Upanishad.

absolutely perfect in any of the sense organs or sense perceptions. There is some imperfection, in some form or other; so you cannot know absolutely correctly. You can touch something, but how do you know that your sense of touch is perfect. There are certain scientists or physicists who have invented certain instrument of touch which will prove that your sense of touch is very imperfect. So, how can you depend upon these senses? What then would be the standard? Leave aside your search after knowledge in the external world and try to know your self first. Your self is the source of all knowledge. Discover it and realize it. That is what Vedânta teaches. Vedânta tells us that self-knowledge is man's supreme achievement. You can attain to it by practising Yoga. It is the power by which you will be able to objectify yourself, that is, you will be able to study yourself. Be introspective by throwing the light of intelligence toward yourself, instead of throwing it to the external objects of senses. Withdraw your mental energy inwards, focus it on your own self, make it your searchlight and then start with your investigation into the realm of spirit. There you will discover the eternal *Atman* as also the relation between yourself and the absolute Truth. You will then be able to realize the omnipotent and omniscient Soul of the universe, who is the Soul of our souls, Light of our light, and who is the eternal source of existence and bliss and intelligence.



## CHAPTER IX.

### THE DIVINE ELEMENT IN US

It has been already stated that the rider in the chariot of the body is our true Self, the *Atman*, as it is called in Sanskrit. It is very subtle, and, so, it is also very difficult to grasp its true nature. It is subtler than the subtlest and finer than the finest. If we try to realize it, we will have to transcend mental conditions and intellectual limitations. Starting from the gross physical body we will have to go to the sense powers, then to sensations, next from sensations to percepts and then, again, to concepts. Then we come to the intellectual plane. From the physical plane we gradually rise to the plane of the senses, then to the plane of sensation, next to the psychic mental plane. Among them we will find that some are lower than others.

If we study very closely our mental condition, we will find that the faculty of determination is stronger, and finer than the power of attention. The ego or the sense of I-consciousness is again finer than the faculty of determination. The ego is one who combines all these different sensations, percepts and concepts, and identifies, and classifies them and makes our whole being one continuous whole. That is the ego.

We have also seen that this ego is a reflection, or image, of something which is higher and still

finer than the ego. Ordinary minds cannot go beyond this ego. The ego, the sense of I, me or mine, is the limit. We cannot ordinarily think of anything beyond it. Our conception at its best goes up to this ego or I-consciousness which means such terms as *I*, *me* or *mine*. But anything that is beyond that limit is not grasped by ordinary minds. The materialistic thinkers deny the existence of anything beyond this ego. The religionists try to know its nature through ceremonies and rituals, and doctrines and dogmas and faith. But in philosophy like Vedānta, you find that the whole truth of religion is based upon what is beyond the ego. That part which is beyond the ego is divine, is immortal. We cannot know it by ordinary means or in the usual sense of the term.

The ego is subject to change, subject to growth, subject to various kinds of evolution, but the divine self within us is beyond change and evolution. The changes of the physical body, changes of sense powers and of the mind do not affect what is beyond the ego. The ego is the image of the divine part. We hear the expression that God dwells within us, and then we ask: "How can God dwell within us?" "Why does He dwell within us?" These questions cannot be answered by those who believe in a personal God as dwelling outside of the universe with a human form and with human attributes. They will find it extremely difficult to understand how a personal God can dwell within human beings in a human form. And consequently those who believe in a personal God with a human

form and human attributes, think God as sitting on a throne outside of the universe and issues commands. God, they believe, is far away from them and not within.

But when we think of the higher conception of God, that is, God as all-pervading Spirit, dwelling everywhere, interpenetrating every atom, then and then only we can understand how God dwells within us. He has His personal aspect for those who believe in His personal aspect; but He has other aspects too. He is impersonally personal. He has no particular form, yet He can take any form to satisfy the desires and prayers of the devotee. God is the soul of the universe, just as our soul is impersonally personal. The soul has no particular form in us. If it has any form we can see or perceive it with our senses but we cannot. That shows that it has no material form. Similarly, God, being the soul of the universe, being the universal soul, has no particular form, yet He assumes diverse forms. In truth, He is formless. But He assumes the form and His gross form or physical body is the whole phenomenal universe. He has infinite eyes, infinite ears infinite limbs, and infinite senses. He sees through all eyes; He hears through all ears; He thinks through all brains and minds. In fact, our minds are parts of the cosmic mind just as our intellects are parts of the cosmic intellect. And as God is the Lord of the universe, He is the soul of our souls, the soul of the ego. If we can understand this point and grasp this conception of God, we shall be able to know how

God dwells within us, and what relation there is between the ego and the divine Being. The ego is subject to change, but the divine spark, that portion which is divine within us, is not subject to change. It is always the same. The ego goes through various kinds of evolution. The ego is described as one enjoying the fruits of actions, thoughts and deeds. It is the ego who enjoys all the pleasures and it is also the ego that suffers all pains. But what is behind the ego, is the rider in the chariot of the body, is above the categories of pleasure and pain. He does not enjoy, nor does he suffer from any change, physical or mental. It is the ego who enjoys or suffers, but what is beyond it stands unaffected by mental changes. It is the highest, and the subtlest thing in the universe. It is higher than the mind, than the intellect. It is higher than the ego, because the ego owes its existence to the *Atman* or the Divine principle in us. In fact, the ego is the reflection or image of '*Atman*', the '*true Self*'. It is immortal and eternal. It is deathless, but all other things are subject to death.

Death means *change* or *evolution*. Evolution means *change* through death, death of the previous conditions and the birth of a new condition. That is the meaning of evolution. When the condition is transformed from one state into another, that is called *evolution*, and death connotes the same idea. The old conception of death that frightened the ignorant minds was, that death was a state in which everything was destroyed, annihilated, and there-

fore, the idea of resurrection was necessary at that time, because among those people the thought of immortality was unknown. They did not know that the soul was immortal, and, consequently, the fear of death was so strong that they needed something to counteract that feeling of fear; and out of that fear sprang the theory of resurrection of the spirit after death. This theory first originated in Persia. But in India the idea of resurrection in that peculiar sense was not necessary, because the soul or the true self of man was considered to be immortal from the beginning. The Hindu conception was deeper than that of any other nation. The Hindu minds grasped the divine spark within the ego. You will find this idea in no other religion so strongly expressed as it is in Vedânta.

If you go to India, there you won't have to ask the question whether the soul is immortal or not. Every child knows and believes it. There is no question about it, and consequently, they do not try to prove the immortality of the soul. The existence of an immortal substance in man is their first postulate in thinking. Those who have doubts regarding it need proof, and doubts proceed from ignorance. Scepticism grows out of ignorance. Knowledge dispels the sense of doubt or scepticism. Knowledge is comparable to light. As light dispels darkness, so the light of knowledge removes the veil of ignorance, and consequently, raise man above doubts or scepticism.

Therefore, so long as we doubt our immortal

nature, so long as we grope in the darkness of ignorance, we do not know anything about our *true Self*. The immortal part within us is the '*Atman*'! That is the *Purusha*, the real Self of which the ego is but an image or reflection.

Now you will understand through Vedânta what is meant by the passage: "God created man in his own image". Ordinarily you think of God in human terms. And when it is said that man is the image of God, you take it too literally only to be misled. While the point of analogy is metaphysical, you take it only in its physical sense. The real meaning is very deep and profound. It is the relation of the ego to the divine spark or the divine spirit that is all-pervading and how can that formless divine Being be the image of a human being? That question has troubled the minds of the theologians for two thousand years, and they have not as yet come to any satisfying conclusion. Ask a minister of a Church what is the true meaning of the passage: "God created man in his own image", and he will perhaps confess his ignorance about it. In order to grasp this point an aspirant must go to metaphysics or philosophy, brushing aside all wrongly drawn theological conclusions, doctrines and dogmas. But the students of Vedânta can understand this point very easily because their approach to it is from the very beginning spiritual and metaphysical. And, therefore, when we read this passage we know that the true Self is the highest, it is the greatest of all things in the universe.

You may ask: "How do you know that there is nothing greater than that?" Because even our highest thoughts cannot reveal it. On the contrary they are revealed and animated by it. It is above all mental conditions. Anything that is within the mental conditions, or anything that can be grasped by the mind, or the intellect, is not the highest. If we could grasp the *Atman* by the intellect, if we could grasp the divine Being by our thoughts, God would then cease to be limitless. A limited God which functions within the limits of our intellect or mind, cannot be the highest object of worship. On the contrary, our mind would then occupy a higher status than God, because the determining force is greater than the object to be determined. *If God is knowable by the mind, he is no longer God. Such God is personal and creation of man's mind.* But God as conceived in Vedânta is unlimited and infinite. He is the source of all intelligence and consciousness. He is beyond the mental plane. The divine element in us is the deepest essence of our being. Mind and intellect have no access to it. God, the *Brahman* is above mind and beyond thoughts. We will have to go beyond thoughts. That is a very difficult problem. How can we go beyond thoughts, and what will then remain? The Absolute alone. We shall reach that state when we have gone beyond all sensations, percepts, concepts, mental conditions and ideas and impressions and thoughts. Then only the divine spark will be revealed to us. We will see it not by intellectual light, but by divine light. Then we will understand

what is meant by that state which is described by Christ or Buddha—the state of enlightenment, Divine communion, the transfiguration of the divine ego into the *Atman*.

This divine spark or divine principle is all-pervading. It dwells in all living creatures. In fact, it animates everything from the minutest particle to the largest solar system. In man, however, the manifestation of divinity is more vivid and perceptible than in the plants or the lower animals. *Man is the highest experiment of the evolutionary process.* It has the finest organism, the finest nervous system, brain etc., and the human being alone is capable of grasping the truth that God resides in all or that the ego is the image of God. No other animal can grasp this point. Other animals in order to gain this knowledge must evolve to the human plane. Therefore, the human form is uptill now the highest product on this plane of existence. It is even higher than the other planes,—Angelic plane, the plane of the *devas* or bright spirits, because here we have the advantage, we can become angels or bright spirits, we can reach the state of the absolute Truth from the human plane, transcending all other minor planes in other realms. But if the *devas* or bright spirits wish to go beyond their realm they will have to be born as human beings. They cannot attain to that state directly and immediately, but they have to go through many intermediate states, many conditions of evolution before they can reach the Absolute. Therefore, it is said that the human plane is better, is more



advantageous, than the *devic* or the Angelic planes. The human being by his thoughts and deeds can become an angel, but angels cannot reach the Absolute state right away. Angels have their limitations. They are not as yet perfect; they are not yet free from evolution. They will have to evolve to the human plane for catching a glimpse of the Divine. The human souls alone are capable of the highest truth or the Absolute. The Absolute is the highest. It is beyond thoughts, but the plane of the angels is within the realm of thoughts. Angels have thought bodies. We can think of the angels, of what powers they possess, etc. Personal God is a little higher than angels, although the angels of the highest order remain attached to the same plane as the personal God does. But we can go beyond the personal God. We can become the essence of the personal God from the human plane. Therefore, we have a greater advantage than the angels, not to speak of lower animals. We must make the best use of our opportunities which we have at our disposal.

This divine spirit though it dwells in us, is not perceptible to senses. Ordinary people cannot grasp, as I have already said, how this divine Being dwells in us and in every atom, because their minds are not as yet spiritually awoke. They live on the surface and their intellect also is not penetrating. Therefore they cannot go beyond a very definite limit.

But this divine principle or divine Being can be

perceived by those who are possessed of sharp intellect and keen understanding. We will have to sharpen our intellect and quicken our imagination, and that is the only means to God-realization. We must withdraw our minds from the objects of distraction, concentrate it on the cherished goal. It means concentration of mind is required of us. At the outset the goal may be ordinary, but gradually we shall focus our mind on higher and higher point till it reaches the highest goal or the true Self in us. Wise are they who have studied and perceived the true Self. When they know it, nothing remains unknown to them. Why? Because they have entered the realm where ordinary science and knowledge cannot penetrate. Science is within the limits of the sense perceptions as I have explained again and again. Science starts from sense perception and ends in sense perception after making certain theories and hypothesis. Science starts with observation and experiments and leads us up as far as the senses can go, and then it makes certain deductions, inferences, and those inferences are put into forms of hypothesis, and those are tentatively true for the time being. But the objects of those theories cannot be perceived by any science. The objects of those theories and the truths of those theories are in the realm of metaphysics or in the realm of philosophy. And the wise man is one who has realized the truths, not only of sciences, or of philosophies, but of metaphysics which is the starting point of all religions. Therefore, a God-realized man is greater than a scientist

or an ordinary philosopher. If we can go beyond the realm of our ego, what else remains to be accomplished? We then accomplish everything. Then we know all the states of evolution, and of cosmic evolution. We transcend the realm of the personal God, and come to the nameless and formless entity. It is the universal Spirit which is impersonal. It is the source of all existence. Nothing remains unknown in that state. So those who have sharpened their intellect and understanding through the practice of concentration and meditation, and reached the state of super-consciousness can realize the immortal Self whose nature others cannot know, nor can they even conceive of it. It is imperceptible for others. Ordinary mortals are deluded by the objects of the senses. The attraction is tremendously strong. They are hypnotized, as it were, by the tempting conditions and surroundings. You may ask: "Who has hypnotized us?" The external world has hypnotized us. We cannot get away from it, it is so charming, so attractive. The external world gives us suggestions. We come in contact with the external world through the gates of our senses, and we receive blows which come in the form of suggestions, and these suggestions confuse our minds, and we do not know what we ought to do. We forget our real self, —we forget our true nature, our relation to the Supreme, what we were in our past and what we shall be in future. We have forgotten everything. We have hypnotized ourselves unconsciously, we have come within the realm of a

dream, and this dream is called in Sanskrit *mâyâ*. What is *mâyâ*? It is that by which we have become hypnotized.

Now, in this hypnotic sleep we are thinking of ourselves as one with the body. We attribute the changes of the body to our real self. Thus when the body is born we think we are born and when it is sick, we feel we are sick and when it is dying, we think we are dying. We think, though wrongly, that these conditions affect the ego in us. But the ego is not subject to these conditions. It is body only that is subject to these conditions. If we can only de-hypnotize ourselves, we shall come to know how foolish we have been so long. We have made ourselves fools by running after things which attract our senses and give us certain suggestions and put us into endless confusion. That de-hypnotization is essential. We must wake up from this sleep of ignorance—from this sleep of delusion. Having awakened from the sleep of delusion, if we come to that state of extreme longing to know the Absolute, then we shall search after the Absolute, and not until then. Ordinary people are contented with their present conditions. They think they are happy, not knowing what true happiness is. This moment they are happy, the next moment unhappy. What is the reason? Because they have not yet discovered the source of true happiness. True happiness will come to them when they reach the highest, when they realize the eternal truth, their immortal nature. The Ruler

of Death thus describes the process by which we can realize that immortal nature.

First of all, we must start from the gross physical body and go deeper to the causes. In our search after the *Atman*, or the true Self, we shall find that what is the immediate cause of the gross physical body, is also the effect of some finer cause. The chain of causation is very closely linked together. Sense perceptions or sense powers and vital powers are the causes of the gross physical body. We must start from the effect and go to the cause and merge the effect into the cause, and trace the cause of that. Yama says: "Merge the words into thoughts."<sup>1</sup> By words he means the power of speech. The words we utter are the effects, the outward expressions of our ideas and thoughts. They are very closely related. We cannot express a word without having a thought behind it, and we cannot think without thinking in words. So words and thoughts are very closely connected. In fact, they are one and the same. The words are the outward expressions, or the physical expressions of thoughts or mental ideas. Similarly, the external objects which we perceive are closely related to the sensations of those objects or percepts that are in our mind; so the external objects will be drowned into those sensations. Sense powers will be drowned into the senses; sensations will be poured into the condition of the mind and mind will

१। "यच्छब्देर्वाक्यमन्तरी \* \* ।

—Katha-Upanishad, 1. 3. 13.

be merged into the intellect or the power of determination, and when the power of determination is merged into the ego, then we come to a point where all these relations of the external world cease to exist. And finally the ego is merged into the higher Self.

We must withdraw first our attention from the external objects, then from the body, then from the sense organs, then from sensations, then from mental conditions, then from the intellectual faculties, and lastly we will come to a point of the sense of *I*, *me* and *mine* or I-consciousness. Even when other senses have ceased to function, there remains that constant sense of I-consciousness. That is the prelude to the revelation of man's real Self.

The real Self has no sense of '*I*'. The sense of '*I*' means differentiation, carrying as it does the sense of 'not-I' etc. The Absolute is undifferentiated, unlimited, and that stage is said to be the state of extreme peace, calmness, repose and silence. No words can reach there; no noise of any kind can exist there.<sup>1</sup> The sun, the moon and other stars which are visible to our senses are invisible there. How can the earthly light illumine that

१। न तत्र सूर्यो भाति न चन्द्रतारकम्,

नेमा विद्युद्यतो भान्ति कुतोऽयमग्निः ।

तमेव भान्तमनुभाति सर्वं

तस्य भासा सर्वमिदं विभाति ॥

—Katha-Upanishad, 2. 2. 15.

state? It is beyond the reach of all earthly light, yet it is not darkness. It is self-luminous and self-sufficient. The sun does not illumine it, but the sun is illumined by it. The stars are luminous because of that self-effulgent light of the *Atman*, but the stars cannot illumine that. That self-luminous entity is our true Self, is immortal, is infinite. Our individual lives are parts of this immortal Being. Time space and limitations of nature shrink away before its revelation. Death also disappears before it as the mist before the rising sun.

To those who are sleeping in self-delusion the Ruler of Death has a call to self-awakening.<sup>1</sup> He asks to find the knower of the immortal Self and learn the method by which the immortal Self can be realized. One must be enlightened by the grace of realized men for the path is as difficult to tread as to walk on the sharp edge of a razor. The wise unanimsly hold that this is the most dangerous path. If we have any attachment to anything of the world, we cannot rise to the plane spiritual. All kinds of attachment hold us back on the material plane. Even if we love anyone, that will be a stumbling block. So we must rise above all attachments.

I have explained to you just now that we will have to go step by step beyond the realm of the senses, beyond the reach of intellect till we catch glimpse of

१। "उत्तिष्ठ जाग्रत प्राञ्ज वरान् निबोधत।"

the highest. So long as we are confined to the realm of thoughts, we are not on the highest plane, but on the plane of relativity, which is constantly under the sway of death. This is what the Ruler of Death shows by all these instructions how far the power of death goes. By death he means change. How far does it go? As far as the ego, the intellect, understanding can go. But beyond that, is the realm of immortality—eternal Being, where death cannot reach.

It is beyond all sounds. Sounds cannot reveal that. What are sounds? Sounds are nothing but vibrations of air, and vibration means change, constant change. So that sound means a continuous change, that is, dying every minute. The sound is constantly dying and is re-born again and again. It is within the laws of the phenomenal world. Therefore, sound cannot reveal the absolute Being. As sound cannot reveal it, so all sense perceptions cannot reveal it. You cannot touch it. It is beyond all sense of touch, and all other senses have evolved from it. Study physiology, and you will find that the primary sense is the sense of touch. Protoplasm has no other sense but the sense of touch. From that all other senses have evolved. The primary sense of touch cannot reach it. It has no form—how can we see it? As it has no form it is imperceptible, invisible, and, therefore, it is unchangeable, because it is not subject to any of the sense conditions, because it cannot be seen, heard, tasted, smelt, or touched, therefore it is unchangeable or immutable. It is without taste,



without smell or odour, without colour. What is colour? Colour is nothing but vibration of ether. It is the condition of light. When light ceases, you do not see any colour. There is no colour without light. So we will have to leave it behind. Those who are fascinated by colours are self-deluded; they do not know what colour is. A rose appears beautiful so long as there is light on it. In darkness it is no longer beautiful, and so with all colours.

Think of the condition of our self-delusion. How we have been living as fools, without knowing the real state of affairs. And here comes Vedânta with a hammer of knowledge, and strikes that hammer on our heads to awaken us, to rise above this self-delusion and see things as they are in reality. Do not remain self-deluded.

What things can we possess? What things can belong to us of this world? Is there anything that we can possess? Nothing! We cannot even possess our own bodies. We will have to leave our bodies behind us when we depart, and everything connected with the body will remain behind also; and therefore, a wise man does not feel attracted by anything of the world. You claim your children, your husbands, wives and relatives as your own. Who are they? Open your eyes and see. They are all children of that immortal Bliss. They are not yours. Why do you claim them? You may ask: "How will this world go on?" Let the world die! It would be a blessing if the world

were to die—it would be heaven. Such an imperfect world ought not to exist. See how the newspapers are filled every morning. They are being filled with the news of crimes, murders etc; and still we glorify this world and think we are living a most wonderful life, a most beautiful life. We think ourselves happy, and we are doing so much good work, improving the world. How can we improve when we are groping in the darkness of ignorance, when we ourselves are full of imperfections? We do not think for a moment of these impossibilities. Let the world die! If it is bound to die some day, why not sooner? Those questions are foolish, therefore we should not think of those questions, but we should try to get the immortal Bliss first and be prepared to face death at any moment, so that we will know with perfect conviction that we cannot die, and at the last moment we should say that we are deathless.

You know the story of that sage in India who was going through a jungle, and he was repeating "I am He; I am He; I am the Absolute; I am the eternal Truth." As he was going alone in the jungle, suddenly there came a royal tiger and jumped on him and attacked him. Another saint was behind him, he was ahead of the rest, and he saw from the distance that a tiger came and attacked him. The tiger grappled his neck, but still he was uttering "I am He, I am He, deathless, immortal," and passed out. Who can say that? He alone who has realized it. There is the strength. That strength we need, that strength we must have.

Pursuit of material things takes away strength from us instead of adding it to us. It is vain and idiotic. We must get out of this condition, rise higher and realize our own glory and majesty and feel that we are divine. There is no use of praying, saying: "Give me this, give me that." It is sheer nonsense. Why should He give you? Why are you hankering after material things all the time? Pray for that immortal Bliss, for that knowledge, for that divine wisdom, for that strength, emancipation, freedom from all bondage, pray for that. The wise man never prays for anything of this earth, for material things for they can never enrich him, but they are a hindrance in the way of our highest realization. Beginningless is our immortal life and it is also endless. It is beyond intellect, beyond understanding and beyond sense-relation. By knowing that alone one can transcend the realm of death. Thus the Ruler of Death answers that question. After describing the whole philosophy, he says: "Know that *Atman*. He who has known that immortal Self has become immortal". Others who have not known the immortal Self are within the realm of death. Knowing means Being. Bacon said: "Knowing is Being". When you have known your immortal Self you become immortal, and not until then. When you have known God you have become Divine. That is God-consciousness. Here knowing is identical with being. True love comes only on that exalted state. It is never based upon selfishness. It rests

on wisdom or knowledge. In fact, it is synonym for wisdom. In the highest sense true love and true knowledge are one.

Do you love anything better than your own self? Nothing. Self-love is the strongest in ordinary men and women, and every other love is secondary. Why is that love the strongest? Because it is one with self-consciousness; it is one with knowledge. You cannot separate your self-love from your self-consciousness. Wherever there is self-consciousness, there must be self-love. They are inseparable. If you read my lecture on "*Way to the Blessed Life*", you will get a better understanding of that idea.

This story of Nachiketâ and the instructions given by Yama, the Ruler of Death, will enlighten the minds of all those who hear it and study it, and those who have heard and understood the real spirit will attain to the everlasting glory and bliss.

This is the greatest of all secrets. Why? Because all other secrets are not worth having, but this is the most important because it is directly connected with every mortal. Every mortal wishes to know whether he or she will live after death, and it is a sealed book to them; but there are some who have opened that book and have unravelled the mystery and realized the Truth. Therefore, it is said to be a secret of secrets. It is not that we should keep it secret, but it is secret because other ordinary mortals cannot grasp it, cannot know

anything about it, cannot answer this question, cannot solve this mystery. But if a realized man understands it and explains it before others regularly, others may gradually be enlightened and cultivated. It is through the grace of spiritual teachers alone that the ordinary mortal can grasp the mystery of death and unravel it to their perfect satisfaction. Such is the opinion of Yama, the Ruler of Death.

## CHAPTER X

### THE IMMORTAL SELF

It has already been noticed that the true Self is beyond the reach of senses. It is called in Sanskrit *Atman*, which is our true nature. It is imperceptible to the senses: but by knowing it men can transcend the realm of Death (Yama) and become immortal.

The Ruler of Death (Yama) has already described the true nature of the Self and also the method by which one can attain to immortality, but in this chapter he explains more adequately why the senses and sense powers cannot disclose the true nature of the self. Our true Self which is a part and parcel of the universal Spirit, is divine, but the senses and sense powers cannot reach it because the self-existent one has pierced the opening of our senses and has made them go outward, go forward and not inward. Therefore, the people perceive the external objects with the senses. The sense powers are created in such a way and are limited in such a manner that they can only come in direct contact with the external objects of senses and cannot go beyond them. Our minds are continually dragged outward and our senses distracted by external objects. Whenever we see any fascinating thing, our mind is attracted by it and we become attached to it, but the sense

powers do not help us in getting away from the sense objects.

So long as we are following the powers of the senses and sensations, we forget what is within us; we forget our true Self and become fascinated and charmed by the external objects of the world. But there are some wise men who can withdraw their senses from the external objects, and direct them towards the indwelling higher Self or the *Atman*. By that method they can realize the true nature of the *Atman*.<sup>1</sup>

That process by which we can withdraw our senses from the external objects is called the method of *Râja Yoga*. By means of that method one can easily overcome all the influence that keep us fettered on the sense plane. But ordinary people lack that power. They try to see and perceive things outside of them. There is in man an instinctive urge for the pursuit of sense objects but the pursuit of the object of the senses will never reveal to us our true self which is immortal and unchangeable. It is for this reason that those who are studying external nature know so little about the inner Self. All the scientists, physicists, chemists know nothing about their true Self. Their mind is absorbed by other interests. They can tell you how different things are produced by the combination of atoms and molecules, how the

१ । पराङ्मुखानि वशयन्त्यन् स्वयन्मूर्तस्मान् पराङ् पश्यन्ति नान्तरात्मान् ।

कश्चिदीदृशः प्रत्यगात्मानमेतदावृत्तचक्रवृत्तत्वमिच्छन् ॥

external forces are operating in the external world and what effects they produce upon our bodies etc., but they know nothing about our true Self; in fact, they deny the very existence of the true Self.

That self-existent One, who is the cosmic intelligent Being, who is called by various names, and who is worshipped as the Creator of the universe, is the one who has made these limitations under which we are living now, and it is for this reason, that we do not know our true Self, and cannot perceive the true nature of *Atman* because our senses and sense powers drag our minds outside and keep the mental functions attached to the objects of senses.

Now, the method by which we can purify ourselves and control the senses is described in the *Râja Yoga*, and by following that method one can accomplish most wonderful results. Therefore, the Yogis are those who have realized their true Self, and who do not care for the external objects of senses, because the objects of senses, as I have already said, will never reveal the true and the divine Being who is the Lord of the universe.

Ordinary men, groping as they do in the darkness of ignorance and self-delusion follow the objects of senses, and remain tied to the realm of the senses, and, consequently they are caught in the snare, the widespread snare of death. Those who follow the sense powers, and run after sense objects, objects of sight, hearing, smelling, etc., remain



within the realm of death. They cannot transcend the realm of death, they are mortals, they are self-deluded. But those who have controlled these sense powers and do not run after objects which produce temporary pleasant sensations have spiritual longing for immortality. Consequently, they do not find the unchangeable Reality in the midst of all changes, and they try to rise above them. They see that the objects of senses are constantly changing. The same thing never appears twice. We are living in the midst of continuous change. Atoms and molecules are constantly whirling with tremendous speed. Our body and senses too are not the same as they were yesterday. The things which we saw yesterday do not exist today<sup>1</sup>; they are changed. The change is so minute that we cannot perceive it with our gross senses. But if we analyze the science of the senses, we will find that they are continuously changing, and in the midst of these changes where is the unchangeable thing? Ordinary mortals who are running after objects of senses do not think of that unchangeable *something*. But the wise ones try to go deep to the bottom and discover the unchangeable substance of the universe. If there be anything that is unchangeable and immutable, why should we run after all these things which produce pleasures, and last only for a moment. The seekers after immortality do not care for such things which produce transitory results but they want to know that which is unchangeable and immortal.

The realm of death spreads very far. By 'death' we do not mean absolute annihilation, *but change of form, constant change*. We are dying every minute. Now, in the midst of this continuous series of births and deaths how can we become immortal? Is it possible for us to become immortal? That is the question which rises in the minds of the seekers after Truth. We cannot be immortal with our gross physical bodies, because these bodies will not exist if the change is stopped. If the change suddenly ceases, then this body will go to pieces. So, those who expect to become immortal with this gross physical body are deluded. They are living in the darkness of self-delusion. Even our subtle bodies (*sukshma sariram*), which are known as spiritual bodies, or which the Theosophists call '*astral bodies*', are continuously changing. They are subject to growth and evolution. Even then with our subtle bodies we are not absolutely immortal, we are not free from change. Now, where is the realm which is not subject to death? Only the true Self in us is deathless and unchanging. If we can understand our true Self, if we can realize our true nature, which is beyond all changes, then, we have become immortal. And by realizing our immortal nature, we have realized the divine Being who is the Ruler of the universe, and when that realization comes, all our desires are fulfilled. At present we are suffering from so many desires which we cannot gratify in this world and therefore we create an imaginary heaven in order to comfort our

minds, to console ourselves with the idea that even after death we shall go to a realm where these desires will be gratified. Heavens are nothing but places where we are supposed to gratify our human desires which we cannot gratify now. But even by gratifying those desires in Heaven we shall not escape the realm of changes. If we analyse correctly, we shall find that heavens are also subject to changes. Take, for instance, the pleasure of music or any other pleasure which is supposed to exist in heavens. Now, to hear music, we must have sense organs, we must have ears. We cannot hear music in the same way as we do on this plane without having ears. So also there must be sound. Now, what is sound? Sound is nothing but vibration of air, and there must be air, and that sound means a continuous change of the particles of air, and those particles will enter into the sense organs all the time of hearing and produce a certain sensation in the brain, and that will produce some pleasant or unpleasant feeling. Now, in order to enjoy music, we will have to go through so many conditions, and even then how long can we hear one kind of music? If we try to hear music long on this plane we soon get tired. For instance, if you continuously hear music of one kind, or of various kinds, all the time, without hearing anything else, you will soon get tired. In twentyfour hours you would get so tried that you wouldn't like to hear it again, and that wouldn't be a pleasure to us, and we should not be able to enjoy it after a few days. So, in order to enjoy

the pleasures of the celestial realm we must have some kind of body, or some kind of sense organs, which are subject to growth and decay, which are continuously changing. So by going to heaven we cannot escape the realm of changes, but we will go on in the same way as we are doing here, and, therefore, the wise men, who analyse the true nature and conditions of the phenomenal world, find that heavenly conditions are within the realm of all phenomena. They may be finer, may be higher, but they are also subject to change and, therefore, the wise ones do not care to go to heavens; they want to go beyond heavens, where they would remain in a state of perpetual bliss from eternity to eternity without any change, without losing self-identity or self-consciousness. The true Self is the knower of all conditions, and knower of all external and internal objects. It is the source of all intelligence, knowledge and consciousness. In fact, that by which we know ourselves, we feel our pleasures and pains, is our true Self.

Here, at present, we are all sitting, but at the same time we are also aware that we are sitting. By what knowledge do we know this? Where does this knowledge lie? Does it lie in the body? Does it exist in the brain alone? Where does it exist? If we can know where it exists, then we have found its source, and then we have discovered our true Self which is immortal. Some people may think that it is the gross physical body with all its organs that is conscious of all the external and internal

conditions, but that is too broad a statement. We will have to state more clearly and more minutely. We will have to examine what part in us has this knowledge and intelligence. We know that the body itself is a combination of matter, atoms and molecules and material forces, which by itself cannot produce that knowledge, and self-consciousness which make us living beings. Again, the sense organs and the sense powers, being also the result of material combinations or material forces, are also insentient. They have no intelligence of their own. There is something within us which is not the product of atoms and molecules or material forces, and that immaterial something is the source of all knowledge, intelligence and consciousness.

Mind, intellect and sense powers are likewise insentient or unintelligent substances. They are dull like pieces of iron. Pieces of iron cannot illumine any object. Iron has no light or heat in it, but when we put it into a furnace and heat it, it becomes red hot and it can illumine other things and produce heat, but that heat is absorbed from the fire. By coming in contact with the fire it becomes heated; it absorbs that power of illumining other objects. Similarly, the insentient substances of mind and intellect, of sense organs, by coming in touch with the fire of our true Self, the fire of our intellectual self, appear to be intelligent, but in reality they are unintelligent. It is the fire of *Atman*, the fire of our true Self, that is manifesting itself through the different layers of our being

the intellectual, mental and sensuous planes of existence.

If we analyse in this way, we will find that the innermost part of our being is the true self, which is immaterial, immutable and indestructible. Nothing can change that intelligent Knower which is within us. Whether we go to sleep, or we wake up, whether we feel any particular sensation of touch, or smell, of sight, or hearing, the knower is always the same. That is a constant quantity within us. If you only analyse and watch the different conditions of your own mind, and see how that witness-like something is constantly watching and is conscious of all these conditions, then you will be able to know how this true Self is absolutely unchangeable and always of the same nature.

That by which we know that there is a pleasing colour or a pleasant taste, or an odour, that by which we know the feeling of touch, whether it is a pleasant touch, the sweet touch of a baby or of one who loves us, and that by which we know all the sensations, pleasant or unpleasant, is our true Self. That is immortal, and that is the answer to the question which was asked by this young seeker after Truth who went to the abode of Death. The pupil asked: "If there be Immortality, what is that immortal Soul and what is it like?" To that question the Ruler of Death said: "It is formless, yet it is the source of all forms. It is not like the gross physical body, but it produces the gross physical body by

its powers. All powers that we manifest during our lifetime proceed from that common source which is immortal, and if we forget—if we do not recognize that immortal part within us, we cannot become immortal". How can we become immortal? The most attractive things of the world exist in relation to us so long as we are conscious of them. Now, if we can imagine just for a moment that if we become unconscious of our own existence, where will all these things be? Where will they go? Will they remain in relation to us? No. They will disappear. We shall not be conscious of anything. Suppose we shut our eyes, ears and all our senses, then if anything touches our body, we shall not be conscious if we withdraw all our senses. We can do that; it is possible that you can withdraw your mind from every part of your body, and if anything touches any part of your body, you do not feel that touch, and that will give direct proof to you that your mind is all-powerful, and your body has no intelligence, or has no sensation. Then even you can withdraw yourself from the mental conditions. The mental conditions may rise, or may not rise. All the desires, necessities and troubles that bother us now will become non-existent if we can withdraw ourselves from the mental conditions. And where will the external world then go? We do not know. It will exist in relation to others who are living on the sense plane, but it will not exist in relation to those who are not living on the sense plane.

This world as it is, as we are perceiving it with our

senses, does not exist in relation to our departed spirits. They do not see these things unless they come in direct contact with these things and remain earth-bound. These things do not exist. When we fall asleep all beautiful things like sunrise, flowers, and everything else vanish, but in a dream state we may find a beautiful landscape in our dreams and we may enjoy all the beautiful sceneries. Those mental pictures would be just as real as the pictures of our waking state at that time. But these pictures will vanish, will not rise as we wake up.

In the same manner, it can be shown that all these things which are on the sense plane, that is, which can be perceived by the senses, have relative existence, but not absolute existence. They exist only under certain conditions, and when the conditions change, they do not exist in relation to us, and, therefore, I say that if we suddenly become unconscious, in our faint state, all these things vanish. Those who have fainted will know that a curtain drops and everything disappears. You may fall on the floor and you would not know where you are, you are not conscious at all. The connection is cut off. You might get hurt in your body, but you are not conscious of it. The body may be injured, but you are not conscious of it; so, our relation with the body is a very transitory relation. It is not a permanent relation. We consider it a permanent relation simply through ignorance, because we do not think of these things. We remain self-deluded, but a wise man is one who does not delude



himself, but who sees things as they are in reality. If the body be unconscious of anything, why should we call it conscious entity? If the body cannot know anything, why should we attribute that power of knowledge to the body? The brain is nothing but an instrument. It is not the brain that perceives everything. Some of the materialists and physiologists have declared that brain is everything, and brain perceives everything. But brain is only an instrument like a piano. A piano cannot play by itself. The keys may be perfect, but it needs a player, and that player of the piano is our true Self, is our Atman, and that player is immortal. The music is not in the piano but in the mind of the player. Similarly, all the functions, all the power of intelligence, the desires and consciousness exist in our true self and not in the brain, nor in the sense organs, nor in our physical body. When we know this, we have transcended the realm of death. If we can know this, know our true Self here and now, we have risen above all changes—physical, mental and intellectual, the realm of death and all these planes. When we transcend them and rise to a higher plane, we begin to catch glimpse of the immortal self. The true Self is the source of all knowledge and consciousness. We think we get knowledge from outside. We never get an iota of knowledge from outside; it grows from within as a reaction to environment. It is a kind of reflex action. External objects produce a certain stimulus to the system and in our reaction to it we derive knowledge from within it. Take an idiot and try

to explain a fact which he does not understand. If his intellect is dull of understanding, not sharp, if his intellect is not quick, all your words will fall flat on his ears and he will not grasp them at all. It shows that we cannot pour knowledge into a person who is not developed, who has not the power to manifest the inner knowledge which proceeds from the true self.

Now, that by which we know our own existence, know the external world, the sun the moon and the stars is the true self. Therefore each individual soul in its true nature is all-knowing. Ignorance is nothing but the darkness produced by a thick veil that stands between our true Self and our individual ego. When that veil drops off, the light of intelligence flows into our ego, and then the ego acts as an intelligent ego.

At this stage the Ruler of Death explained that question which was asked by the young seeker after Truth. What part is immortal and where does it exist. It exists in us, and our true Self is immortal by nature. So we do not have to attain to immortality by serving somebody, or by going somewhere, but we can attain to immortality by knowing our immortal nature; by knowing our true Self we know God, because God exists as our true Self, or our true Self is part and parcel of the universal Self or Spirit.

Here we must not misunderstand the meaning of the word *Self* which I have been using here. But those who are not familiar with the Sanskrit term

'*Atman*' may misunderstand me. They may think we are trying to be extremely selfish. The true Self does not refer to this ordinary self which makes us selfish, but it means the *Atman*, the divine and the immortal part within us. It is the unchangeable element of the ego.

If we then wish to be immortal, we must try to realize the true Self, the *Atman*, the divine spark within us. That realization will bring to us salvation of the highest kind. No matter wherever we go after death, we shall retain that spiritual illumination once acquired.

The true Self is the knower of all dreams as well as of all conditions of the waking state. It knows where the waking state ends, where the dream state begins and where the dream ends and the waking state begins. What knows it is the constant factor in the midst of all changes. It retains its identity throughout. When one knows it, one becomes absolutely free and rises above all pains and sufferings. If we know the true self, we shall never worry, we shall never be anxious regarding our future whether we continue to exist or not. That question will not bother us any longer. It will be answered once for all, and the means to it is to withdraw our mind from external objects, and fix it upon our true Self. If we become unconscious of the external world for the time being and think deeply of our inner Self, and realize it, we can come down to the plane of our senses and enjoy the external conditions without forgetting our true

Self, which is immortal. All worries and anxieties will then disappear.

How much we are worrying at present for these external conditions. We are trying to mould them and make them perfect so that they will be perfect forever. Shall we ever be able to do it? No. No matter in whatever way we may try, we cannot stop the change that are going on all the time. Therefore a wise man does not bother his head regarding the changes of the external world, but he tries to realize his immortal nature first and truly rise above all worries regarding the future life, regarding death and all relevant conditions.

The true Self is infinite. We are all parts of the Infinite. Each one of us is a portion of the Infinite. We are connected with the Infinite, but at present we have become finite, falling within the limits of the sense powers, mental and physical conditions. There is a deep striving in each soul to outgrow those limitations and become conscious of the Infinite. The soul will not be contented until it has realized its infinite nature, and that is the goal toward which we are running, consciously or unconsciously. Anything that limits us, binds us and makes us remain confined within certain conditions and limitations is pleasant but does not satisfy our spiritual cravings. When we have outgrown all these limitations, the true emancipation will come to us. We shall then enjoy an unshaken peace under all conditions and circumstances knowing that our true Self is immortal, that we are parts

of the Infinite, that we are all-knowing, that we are unchangeable and divine in our deepest essence.

## CHAPTER XI.

### THE REALM OF IMMORTALITY

We have already learnt that our true Self is the knower of our waking and dream states. That by which we know all the actions of our waking state, all the activities of our body, senses and mind is our true Self, and it is the same as that by which we know all our dreams. When we dream, we are conscious of our dreams. That self-conscious entity (*Atman*) which perceives all the various kinds of dreams is also the same self-conscious entity which perceives all the activities of sense perceptions during the waking state. We do not lose our identity when we go into the dream state, nor do we lose our identity when we do not dream in our sound sleep.

If we analyse these three states of consciousness, the waking, dream and dreamless-sleep states, we find that there is *something* in us, the knower of all these states, which is always the same. He who dreamed yesterday is dreaming today and tonight, is doing the works of the waking state, and tomorrow and day after tomorrow the same conscious self will go on perceiving these things. Although the dreams may change, the dreams may come and go, we never dream the same thing twice, we never perform the same act twice during our

waking state although we may think that we have been performing the same thing over and over again. But it is not the same. On a searching analysis we find that the physical and mental conditions are always changing. The physiological conditions are also subject to change. When a dream state comes up and ends in waking state and when a waking state goes down and ends in a dream state, who perceives the beginning and ending of all these different states of consciousness? He who perceives the beginning and ending of these various states of consciousness is our true Self and it is He who perceives that the waking state is gone and the dream state has begun—that the dreamless-sleep state has begun, and the waking state has arisen. All these changes of mental states are perceived by one's self-conscious entity (*Atman*). That entity is not subject to change, but it is always the same—the same knower all the time.

The knower does not change, but the conditions change just as states of consciousness do change. If we try to understand our true Self, we find that this self-conscious entity (*Atman*) is unlimited in consciousness, although our ego may be limited in consciousness. But the ego is not the same as that which perceives these different states of consciousness. The ego is only a phase, the appearance or manifestation, or limited condition of this unlimited conscious entity.

This conscious entity is not subject to death. It never dies, and therefore, it is said that by thinking

of this self-conscious entity (*Atman*)—the knower of these different states of consciousness—by meditating upon this self-conscious entity (*Atman*), one becomes free from sorrow, free from grief, free from all misery, free from death. But those who have not realized that, those who have not understood this self-conscious entity (*Atman*), the true nature of our being, are always haunted by the fear of death. When a pleasant feeling arises, they are elated; when an unpleasant feeling comes, they are melancholy. What is the cause for it? These states of consciousness come up like waves, and their egos are just like little canoes. As the waves swell up, the egos feel elated and go high, and as the waves go down in the hollow, they feel that they are going down. They wrongly identify their deep Self with these empirical changes. They lack self-control, they have no idea of what is permanent and unchangeable behind the ego. We will have to go behind the ego to discover that unchanging element in us. If anger rises we identify ourselves with anger. We cannot maintain a detached mood, that is, we cannot remain like a witness. When passion rises in the mind, we feel we are one with that passion. The result is endless suffering. We do not care to understand that our body or the mind is not our soul and that while there is a change in the body or the mind, the soul is unchanging. The self-conscious entity or *Atman* in us is like an unchanging witness to all empirical changes. While it knows all changes and perceives all kinds of sensations, it stands



always unaffected by the physical and mental modifications. That part is immortal, and by knowing that one becomes immortal. The ego is only the threshold, the gate by which we can enter into the domain of this immortal entity which is our true Self.

There runs the lines; "He who knows this living soul or the ego which eats honey" etc. 'Honey' here connotes the 'pleasant sensation' derived from all the objects of senses. The complete meaning of the Upanisadic lines are: "He who knows this living soul which eats honey, or perceives the objects of senses, as being the true Self, the immortal Self, and which is always near, is ever free from fear." Here we must consider two things: first is the ego; then we must have to go behind the ego to that which is the unchangeable part, or the background of the ego—the sense of 'I'. The sense of I does not mean anything if the conscious entity does not animate it. The sense of 'I' is merely a mental condition; it is the intellectual faculty which produces this sense. But what does this amount to if there be no self-conscious entity behind it?

Now the sense of 'I' varies, for instance, I am weak; I am fat; I am tall; I am thin; I am lame; I am blind; I am deaf; I am diseased; I am happy, miserable, etc., are so many different states of this sense of 'I'. That is, the sense of 'I' is attached to every condition of the mind, senses, body, intellect, memory, etc. But behind this sense of 'I' there is

self-consciousness by which we say, we know that is I who am suffering—I who am enjoying—I who am believing—I who am talking, etc. So, the subject of that sense of 'I' is that self-conscious entity (*Atman*), and this sense of 'I' varies in the time of sleep—in the time of dreamless sleep. We have no sense of 'I' then, but still the self-conscious entity (*Atman*) is there, and it is always near. The nearest thing to us is the self-conscious entity (*Atman*). Everything else, even God, is far away from us—much farther than this self-conscious entity (*Atman*). If you are unconscious—if you become unconscious right at this minute, where would be your God? Who would think of God? When the devotee who is worshipping God falls unconscious,—right at that moment he will forget the existence of God, prayer will stop. God is not so near to the devotee—or to the individual—to every individual—as this self-conscious entity; and, in fact, the self-conscious entity (*Atman*) is the Lord—the Lord of the past and the Lord of the future. The past would not exist, future would not exist if this self-conscious entity (*Atman*) ceases to manifest itself.

How do we know that there is such a thing as future? By our self-conscious entity—by self-consciousness. If we are unconscious, we do not know the past, future or present. Therefore the Lord of the past and future is this self-conscious entity (*Atman*), and this living soul in its true nature is one with it. Because this living soul or the ego who enjoys the pleasures, who is limited

by this sense of *I, me, mine*, and who enjoys and suffers, will not exist if it were separated from the self-conscious entity. The ego which is not conscious of itself is equal to non-ego; but the conscious entity is not limited by any particular sense of *I, me* or *mine*. The conscious entity in each one of us is the same. The conscious entity in me cannot be differentiated from the conscious entity in you, nor in any living creature. How do we differentiate? We can only differentiate the manifestations. We can say that you are a conscious entity, so am I a conscious entity; but when you have particular thoughts or ideas or expressions, then in those particular expressions or ideas or thoughts we may vary—we may differ, but as self-conscious entities, we are one. If we can abstract our self-conscious entity from the particular conditions or states of consciousness, mental, sensuous, or physical, then that self-conscious entity (*Atman*) is undifferentiated and cannot be differentiated from each other. In fact, it is one self-conscious entity that is manifesting through so many individual forms. All living creatures are like the centers through which this one self-conscious entity is manifesting its intelligence and consciousness.

A dog has self-conscious entity (*Atman*) just as much as we have in ourselves. A dog is conscious of his own self. He may have his sense powers and mental powers limited, but still he has his mind, he has his feelings, he has his perceptions, his passions—anger, hatred, jealousy, love, pleasure—

only different in degree. A cat has those things;—even a minute animalcule has self-consciousness. Wherever there is life there is self-consciousness. Even in vegetables there is a very imperfect expression of self-consciousness. Some of the modern scientists admit that vegetables have their souls; in fact, there is a theory that every atom has its soul, and some of the scientists admit this theory. So wherever there is life—even in minerals—there is soul. *We cannot limit this field of souls*—the whole universe is a living soul. So there is no such thing as dead matter in this universe. What we understand by dead matter is not really dead, it has latent life in it. And so, from the minutest animalcule up to the highest *Devas*, the bright spirits, gods, the personal God, the Lord of the universe, there are only different gradations of the manifestation of this one self-conscious entity, which is infinite and all-pervading.

But in order to know the universal, self-conscious entity, we must know what is present in our egos. That is the nearest and if we have known its nature, we have found that it is immortal, and then we have no more fear of death. Why do we fear death? Because we are attached to the conditions of our body and sense perceptions, and we do not want to give them up. We have a desire to cling to them with firm tenacity. Therefore we have fear of losing those things at the time of death; that is all. We must know that our *Atman* cannot possess anything of this material world, not even this body which does not belong to it but is only

the instrument or machine which the egos have created in order to fulfill certain desires. The self-conscious entity does not possess a chair, or clothes, or furniture, or wealth, or real estate, or children. It cannot possess children, because children have also their *Atman* in them which is one with the self-conscious entity of the parents. It is one and the same. There is no child, no father, in that realm; there is no mother, no sister, no brother—all self-conscious entities (*Atman*). But all these human relations come later—come with the egos, with the sense of *I, me, mine*. But when we take God as the conscious entity, we go beyond the relation of *I, me, mine*, and that is the eternal realm. That is the realm of Immortality, and therefore Christ said that there is no husband, no father, no mother, no marriage, no giving in marriage in heaven. That Heaven is within us. "The Kingdom of Heaven is within you." We do not know it; we think that Heaven is above the clouds and there we shall go after death and enjoy celestial music. No! That is not Heaven; that is as imperfect as the earth, as useless as our earth; all earthly conditions are there. But the Heaven that is within us, behind the ego, is eternal. There is neither death nor earthly relations, but everything is one, everything is divine, everything is perfect. So if we try to go to Heaven, we must go through the gates of our egos and enter into the realm of our self-conscious entity, our true Self, which is divine and perfect. Then we shall understand the meaning of—"The Kingdom of

Heaven is within you", and not until then. Then we shall escape the fear of death. The fear of death will not bother us then. Death can only take the body and the senses, and certain states of our mind which are subject to change—that is all. But our self-conscious entity, our true Self (*Atman*), which is immortal, is above all these changes already—from the very beginning. So death cannot touch, death cannot injure us or hurt us in any way.

This *Atman* which is the background of each individual ego, is the same as the *Atman* of the Christ. Now, this is a thing which you will not find so clearly expressed in any language other than Sanskrit, or in any philosophy or religion other than Vedânta. If you find it anywhere else, it is only borrowed from Vedânta. It is the peculiar fact that our true Self is one with the true Self of God or of any Prophet. Now, here we must not forget that we must go behind the sense of *I*, *me* and *mine* first, otherwise we will get into trouble; we will make mistakes; we will think that this ego is one with God. It is the true Self, that which is the witness of all the conditions, that which is not limited by the sense of *I*, *me* and *mine*, is the same as the *Atman* of this universe—the cosmic consciousness. And that idea is expressed here showing the relation between the individual soul and the universal spirit. The absolute entity is the background or the producer of the individualized ego in a human body and the individualized ego in the cosmos which is called the First

Born Lord of the universe, the creator, the preserver, the governor of all phenomena.

Why is He called First-Born Lord? Because He came into existence before the elements of nature. All other things of the material world came later, but the Lord, the Creator, the cosmic ego, of which our egos are but parts, came first and He is the first manifestation of the Absolute. The Absolute is beyond all cosmic conditions. It is the source of consciousness, the source of intelligence, the source of all powers and forces that are manifested in the phenomenal world. Therefore, He is called the First-Born Lord of the universe because He had His birth before the elements and the creation of the world. And after producing the bright, highly advanced souls, like angels and archangels, and all other perfected souls who dwell in the heavens—the First-Born Lord produced all the phenomena,—produced human beings and then entered into the hearts of all beings to enjoy the conditions of the phenomenal world. Each individual ego is the receptacle of the cosmic consciousness—the consciousness of the First Born Lord of the universe. We are gaining all these powers, manifesting all these powers through that eternal Being. He who sees this, realizes this—this relation between the individual ego and the cosmic ego of the First Born Lord of the universe, perceives the real nature, the absolute *Brahman*, the eternal Truth,—“And this is that” (*Tvat tamashi*). Here the Ruler of Death is answering the question which the young seeker after Truth

asked: "What is that which is beyond all relativity, beyond good and evil, beyond virtue and vice, beyond past, present and future time relations, beyond space relations?" And in answering that question the Ruler of Death avers that, that from which the individual egos have arisen, that from which the First Born Lord has arisen, is beyond all relativity, is the Absolute. That Absolute is not very far from us. It is within us; It is the source of our intelligence, the basis of our consciousness, the foundation of our existence. Therefore, we live and breathe and have our existence in that absolute Being.

And after describing this, he goes on revealing what else has come into existence from that source of consciousness. This *Atman*, or the absolute Being, is the source of life-force, or *Prâna*, which manifests itself in this world. Now, you know this life force, or vital energy; that by which we are living beings; that which makes the world living; that which is the moving principle in our phenomenal existence—that power, that energy has come out of that one common source. As on the one hand, all energy, all consciousness, all intelligence have come from that absolute Being, so, on the other hand, all the mechanical forces, the material forces, the life-forces,—that which is vital—have also come into existence from that Being. That conscious entity within us is not only the source of consciousness, but it is the source of the life-force—*Prâna*; and we know that *Prâna*, or the life-force, or vital energy is the cause



of all mental conditions—intelligence, thoughts, will, sense powers, organic activities and physical activities. So wherever we see any sign of life, there we see that, that life-force has come into existence because the *Atman* is there. Or we can come to the same conclusion in another way: because the life-force is there, therefore there must be *Atman* behind it. In fact, *Atman* and life-force go together hand in hand. Wherever there is the expression of the one there is also, the expression of the other, it may be latent, or it may be imperfect in manifestation. From the angels or archangels down to the lowest amoeba, or protoplasm or animalcule—wherever there is activity of life-force, there is the manifestation of that self-conscious entity (*Atman*). So you see, the whole world can be reduced to two things: The one is consciousness and the other is activity or motion. The cause of consciousness is the intelligence, and the cause of motion is the *Prâna* or life-force, energy. It is the life-force that manifests itself as heat, light, electricity, and motion. It is the same life force that moves the cars on the streets, moves the engines, only it is manifesting on the material plane through matter, and when it manifests itself on the organic plane, it becomes human magnetism, —sense perceptions on the sense plane, intellectual activities on the plane of intellect, spiritual activities on the plane of spirit. The same one force is pervading all these various planes of existence; and when we perceive anything with our senses, for instance, we see colour, hear sound, we

find that as on the one hand colour is the expression of that life force, the perception of sound is also the expression of that life-force. The organic functions of the organs of sight, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching, are also produced by the life-force—that *Prâna*. Chemical combinations are also the expressions of that same life-force and this life-force comes from that, one source *Atman*.

You see the tendency of these teachings is to show the unity in variety. That is starting from all these various manifestations we are going to that one common centre which is the source of all, and when we have discovered that one common centre then we have risen above all.

Then he gives another illustration: Take an external object, like fire, or heat—like the sun, and describes this: “That fire which is hidden in the fire-sticks”—now you see the time when these teachings were given was pre-historic. It was a time when no other means of making fire was known but by rubbing two sticks, thousands and thousands of years before the Christian era, and so the illustration is archaic, but still it has meaning and as attractive as the meaning of the latest theories. “That fire which is hidden in the fire sticks”—now in ancient times, before they made any fire, they would take two pieces of wood and then rub them together. Sometimes there was a kind of wooden bowl and a thick stick used to grind it, and by friction they used to produce fire, and then in that fire they used to pour butter as oblations. They used to invoke the bright

spirits. The fire was the symbol of bright spirits. They did not worship the fire, but the fire was a purifier. The fire was known as the giver of life, light and heat. In the Rig Veda we find that fire is again considered to be the priest in the Vedas. As in the first verse of the Rig Veda it is said: "We salute fire, we salute '*Ignā*', who is the priest of the bright spirits, the mouth of the bright spirits, the mouth of the god". If anything is poured into the fire the smoke will rise up and it will touch the heavens, the bright spirits will eat it through the mouth of the fire. The flame of fire is described as the tongue of the *Devas*, and if they wanted to pour anything they would pour it on the flame, on the tongue so that it could be eaten. They were poetic, and if they had not been so poetic they could not have discovered those truths. Their minds were childlike and simple, but they were seekers after Truth all the same, and the truths which they discovered are the eternal Truth, which are today supported by the scientists and best thinkers of the twentieth century. So, that fire which is hidden in the fire sticks, which is ignited day after day by men when they wake up and then bring oblations is also the manifestation of that *Prâna* or life force. It is the life force that has produced this fire, heat. The same life force produces the heat in our system, the internal fire by which we digest our food, and organic combustion takes place due to which we have fire in our system as heat.

Now, if you have control over the *Prâna* through the breathing exercises you will generate heat and you will see how that heat will purify the cells of your system. You will begin to perspire as if you are just bathing in sunshine for a long time. You will begin to perspire and all the impurities will be driven out. That will show that there is heat in you, and that heat is nothing but what we call fire. And in the fire sticks when the fire is hidden, we do not see it. Heat is latent and it is by friction that it comes out. How does it lie hidden? There he gives an illustration: "As a child lies hidden in the womb of its mother, so the fire is hidden in the sticks", and the fire is also hidden in our own systems in the same way. This internal fire is well taken care of by the Yogis who never let that fire go out. As a mother protects her child by not eating or drinking anything that will hurt or injure the child, so a Yogi protects the fire or the life-force by not eating and drinking such things as would hurt or injure that fire. Therefore, Yogis live a very different kind of life. They are moderate. They practise abstinence and they observe a great many rules and regulations. Why? To protect that fire-vitality. It is the loss of vitality that brings all diseases, nervousness, unhappiness, nervous prostration, insanity and all physical conditions. If the parents were careful, if the parents reserved their vital energy their children would not suffer, and those parents who do not preserve their own vital energy and beget children are worse than

criminals. The Government ought to punish them for bringing into existence such weak and unhealthy, diseased, half insane children. Dogs and cats die and take human form and for the first time they take that step in evolution. People who wish to improve the social conditions should first observe these laws. Social reform will take place when the individuals have corrected their own weaknesses; and therefore Vedânta tells us to correct the individuals first and society will take care of itself. And that fire which is considered by those who sacrifice oblations into the fire, that fire which is considered very sacred by the Karma Yogis, by the Zoroastrians and by the Hindus, is also the manifestation of that *Prâna*. You know the Parsees (the Persian Religion) began with that same idea that fire is the symbol of the bright spirit, and they still keep the fire burning all the time in the temple. Upon the alter there was no image, but fire, and even today there is a fire in Bombay which was first started in the 7th century before Christ. That fire has been kept alive by the Zoroastrians. That fire is still kept in the temple of the Parsees—Zoroastrians in Bombay. They do not worship the fire, but they consider it sacred, just as the earth, water, and every thing is sacred. The moment we begin to see Divinity as all pervading, everything becomes sacred. And when we worship Mammon everything is matter and we are not conscious of any Divine presence. Then we are materialists, atheists, agnostics, and our life is not worth

living because we do not understand these things. Agnosticism is nothing but an expression of ignorance—living in the darkness of ignorance. That is not a glory. I think it would be a misery to remain in darkness. What do you mean by Agnosticism? I do not know anything. You must be a fool because you do not know anything. Our life is not worth living if we do not know anything. How can we know? That is the question, and we must not do anything unless we know. Why should we hold on to life and beget children? What for? We do not know what these things lead to. First know, then do; otherwise stop. So that fire is the manifestation of *Prâna*.

Then again, that is *Prâna* whence the sun rises. Now, what is that solar energy? We often say that we have gained our life from solar energy, but that is only a partial energy of *Prâna*. The solar energy has come from *Prâna*—the life-force which is universal. So, if *Prâna* is universal, solar energy derives its life, its strength, from that *Prâna*, the life-force. That from where the sun rises in his own glory, and that into which he sets, there all the *Devas* or bright spirits, angels, archangels are contained. None can go beyond. This is That. This is that Absolute. That *Prâna* has come from the Absolute. As I have said, if there be any activities in the *Devas*, mental or physical, bright spirits or Gods, that is the expression of *Prâna*. Who can go beyond that? The moment we begin to think, we are

using that force or *Prâna*. The very attempt to go beyond will be possible only in and through *Prâna*, or the life force. Therefore that *Prâna* is the highest of all forces, and it is the expression of the absolute One.

“What is there in the visible world? What is here in the visible world is the same as there in the absolute *Brahman*, in the invisible world; and what is there, the same is here.” Now this is the most wonderful passage. That is, everything that is in the Absolute is manifested here—the sun, moon, stars, everything, human beings, all the powers, all the glory which we see that human beings can do. There is no glory of any individual, but it is the glory of that Absolute. If you invent a wonderful machine that is not your glory but it is the glory of the Absolute. The Absolute possesses that power. So, if a nation be victorious, that is no glory to that particular nation. It is the glory of that power which is in the Absolute. We fools! We glorify ourselves for knowing the Truth. Whatever is manifested on this plane is there in the Absolute, and whatever is there is here. Every force, every activity, every work, every invention, every expression of thought, great or small, is there in the Absolute.

And what does this sun represent? The sun represents the glory and strength, the power, the life-giving energy which the Absolute possesses and that is all. It is not for the glory of man, nor

of any bright Angel, nor of any particular being, but it is the glory of the Absolute, the conscious entity of the universe. He who does not see this Absolute in all beings, in everything, does not know the Truth. That mortal, that ignoramus, goes from death to death, and is subject to be born again and die again; but he who knows this absolute One as the fountain-head of everything is free from death, and in order to become immortal we must first realize this Absolute, and feel that the conscious entity (*Atman*) in us is one with the conscious entity (*Atman*) of the universe; that the life-force in us is a part of the life-force of the universe, and this universe is One, the one Being manifesting through so many, and when we perceive that unity in the midst of diversity, we have reached the *Realm of Immortality*; otherwise we are within the realm of death and birth.



## CHAPTER XII.

### UNITY IN VARIETY

As stated in a preceding chapter, Nachiketâ, the young spiritual aspirant asked Yama how one can avoid death and rise above all empirical changes. The Ruler of Death thus answered: "He who can see unity in diversity has risen above death," (to see oneness in this diversity of phenomena).

It is very difficult to discover the underlying unity when the phenomena are so varying and endless. Ordinarily, we see with our eyes various things such as the sun, the moon, stars and various objects of the world. Each one of them appears to be distinct from the other, but the question is whether there is any unity behind them or not. Ordinary knowledge, which depends upon sense perceptions, reveals to us things as appearances which only present before us diversity and not unity. For instances, the sun is not one with the moon, nor the moon is the same as the earth, nor the earth the same as human faces. Where is that oneness? That knowledge which reveals to us the unity of existence in the multiplicity of phenomena is independent of sense perceptions. It is not a mere delusion as some people may think, but it is the right knowledge which makes us

realize the Truth which unifies all phenomena. Few people alone possess that higher knowledge with which they can see into the essence of things. Most people live on the surface and they can hardly go below the surface to the bottom of things. As they are floating on the surface, they are deluded by various attractive objects of senses. They cannot see that oneness. And what becomes of those who cannot see oneness? The Ruler of Death answers: "He who sees multiplicity, diversity, alone goes from death to death." That is a very merciless assertion of facts. What does he mean by this "goes from death to death"? Is it a curse? No; it is simply a statement of Truth. How can we understand that he who does not see oneness goes from death to death and he who does see oneness rises above death? It seems to be a puzzle. But in fact there is a large element of truth in the assertion.

Here it may be noted that in the Vedânta philosophy you find no idea of eternal punishment or hell-fire doctrine. That passage which refers to man's going from death to death only implies that he is born again and again. He is subject to birth and death. One cannot go from death to death unless he is born again and again. Death presupposes birth. If we are going to die several times we must be born also several times, otherwise we cannot die. And this recurrence of birth and rebirth is not a curse; it is not a disease, but it is the natural condition of every mortal.

It is a common experience that cause produces effect. So long as the cause remains, there will also remain its effect. Cause and effect are inseparable. So long as the causes that have brought us to this plane remain unchanged, it is futile to seek salvation from the wheels of births and deaths. If we have come once why should we not come again? People often have peculiar idea about themselves. They think that they did not exist before and that they had been created suddenly out of nothing only to live eternally. Obviously this idea is absurd. Science teaches us that no thing can come out of nothing. We cannot come into existence if we did not exist before. If this be the fact, then why have we come to this plane? Is there any purpose behind the process or is it aimless and futile? No. We have come to this world with some definite purpose,—to gain fuller knowledge and vision of life.

What are we going to gain in this life? Do we ever think of that? Few people care to pause and ponder. Emerson said: "The hardest thing in the world is to think". Ordinary people in their rush and clamour of life have no time to think. They are always busy with their material pursuits. There is no thinking on their own initiative. They do not see with their eyes nor do they feel with their hearts. Their thoughts are some one else's opinions. When they feel any need for religion, they visit the church and derive lessons from them as their own experiences.

In fact they have no time to think of the meaning of life. They quote the current phrases and dogmatically deny what is opposed to their rooted prejudice. They are thoughtless by habit and accept another's opinion as final. If the ministers of the church stand up and ask the audience to think in a particular way, such people respond to it blindly without any choice of their own. But if any of the congregation expresses a different view the minister will stop him at once and say: "My friend, you must not think that way; it is not right. You are going against our belief, our faith". So the listener has to drop the idea of thinking. For, he is afraid of eternal punishment in hell. But those whose minds are enlightened and rational, find the idea of special creation hopelessly untrue to facts. Modern science has taught them that nothing is causeless and that there must be certain causes behind our appearance on this plane. In their search after truth they try to discover the causes for it. The causes are not outside of us, because we are born and living. The causes must be within us. We are not forced by somebody else to come here, but, bound by law, we have come here. What has made us bound by law? It is our own selves. We ourselves are causes. Satan did not force us to come down here, nor did God. We are not such dependent creatures as we appear to be. We appear to be very dependent, though, in fact, we enjoy a great deal of autonomy or independence. We have the freedom to think and give turn to,

our life as we wish. We can wish anything we like. None will force us to shun our desires. It means that we have to play our rôle. We ourselves create desires. Desires are great powers. They guide us, direct us and make us perform acts, physical and mental. For instance, you are planning today what you are going to do tomorrow or at some future date.

Early in the morning you get up, take your breakfast and do certain things while at noon or night you perform certain others. The whole round of daily duties is all planned out by yourself. If you do not wish to do that, you can change right away. You may think you are forced by environmental conditions to do this, but because you have accepted those conditions, you have proved yourself to be weak. You have acknowledged your weakness by accepting those environmental conditions, which are debasing to your sense of dignity. If you have no choice to tide over that undesirable situation, it is you who are ultimately responsible for it. If you have the strength to change or leave those conditions, you can also do that. For instance, if you are engaged in any kind of professional work, you will have to go to the office, otherwise you will not get your salary. Now, if you are willing to sacrifice your salary, you will not have to do boring work. That is merely an illustration to show how we bind ourselves by our desires—how we weaken ourselves. So we cannot blame anybody else. If we have to blame anyone, we must blame ourselves. All our plans are fixed. As we live

from day to day, as we fulfil our desires and tendencies, as we build our future on this plane by our thoughts and deeds, so we did determine our life in the very beginning. We have come to this plane as a result of what we wanted before, and we shall continue to live in the future still as we want our desired ends.

Now, what is the purpose of our life on this earth? To gain experience. We eat and drink and study our nature internal and external and gather certain experiences. You may run after wealth or fame or do any work, or invent anything. You are merely studying nature. Do not be proud that you have invented something very wonderful. It merely means that you have understood some laws of nature. Nature has many laws.

Everything is governed by law and human beings are making efforts to know those laws that are working and producing wonderful results. An inventor once told me, after inventing a very complicated machine, that after all it was nothing but a lump of iron. A wheel is placed in a certain relation with another wheel and some power is put on it and then it moves and produces a wonderful effect. But after all, what is it? It is the adjustment of some pieces of iron under certain laws where the things work for definite results. So, all these inventors have invented nothing in the end. They have simply studied the physical nature and its laws—that is all, and gained certain experience and they have outlined that experience by putting

a certain commercial value on it. But what does that commercial value amount to? It does not amount too much. It simply brings certain material results. Those results may last only for a short time and may give certain experiences, some kind of facility to certain things. For instance, the subway (i.e., underground railway) makes it possible for us to run a distance of three or four miles perhaps within three or four minutes, and it shortens the time and distance, that is all. But it has not done anything else. It has given that experience to us that a machine can be built to kill time and distance—that is all. We have learnt that lesson, and what next. Let the companies make gain, but the ordinary people, the riders, have no interest in that. They simply have learnt this lesson from experience that it is possible to shorten time and distance. Ocean steamers give a certain lesson, that there are powers by which we can conquer the waves. Wireless telegraphy has taught us the lesson that there is electricity in the atmosphere, and that electricity can convey our message. Then by putting aside all the commercial side of it, we have only gained this knowledge. But has wireless telegraphy taught us our true Self—what it is like? Has it taught us whether we are immortal or mortal and what will happen after death? No, it cannot. So, are we going to remain on this plane of knowledge and run after this commercial side, which is the worthless side from the highest standard, and sell our ideas? Now, if you have

an idea in your mind you can go to a bureau and sell it for \$10,000, and get that money by selling your idea. And there are people who rob ideas, steal ideas simply to make money. But money is nothing. It is just like earth. It has no significance unless we put some value to it.

So, putting aside the commercial value, if we look at things scientifically, we find that they give us certain experiences. All the objects of our senses give certain experiences, and the individual soul gathers those experiences. Now, why does it gather those experiences? To utilize them to learn nature and to manifest certain powers that are latent in the soul. If that be the cause of our coming to this plane, then that cause will continue until we have studied the whole of nature and gained all the experiences that can be gathered on every plane of existence. Already we have gone through the lower planes of existence like minerals, vegetables, animals and the human plane is higher than those. The human plane includes all other lower planes, so we have learnt them. But on the human plane we have not learnt everything yet, and, therefore, one life which is rushed by various desires and various acts and constant fight against environmental conditions is not sufficient to give us full experience which the soul requires, and therefore we will have to be born again after death. So long as we think that each phenomenon is a separate thing by itself we will have to study and gain experience. We will have to study the earth, every portion of the earth



and thus we shall learn what it is like, what it is made up of. We will have to study water, air, atoms, combinations of atoms, metals and everything. Because each thing is separate, we start from this diversity. When we begin to study nature we start from diversity and then gradually we go deeper and deeper. When we come to the atoms and molecules or to force and energy, we begin to unify, but not until then. So long as we are on the surface, a piece of gold is not the same as a piece of silver or iron. It is different when we study the chemical side of it and the laws which govern the atoms and molecules and the forces that are working on each of these metals and each of these phenomena, but as force, as matter, we see that they are one. Modern science tells us that all forces are nothing but the manifestations of one energy. Forces like gravitation, electricity, heat, light, motion, all come from one common source.

Now, the nearest illustration is the street car, the electric car. There you see electricity produces motion of the car, light and heat and other different things, only the difference is in degree. If we can see that under our eyes, we see there unity in diversity—that one electricity can appear as motion, heat, and light. Similarly the one force of nature appears as gravitation, heat, light, motion, as earth, sun, moon, stars and everything. We do not know now what that force is, but higher knowledge, scientific knowledge reveals that there is unity, not on the surface, but deep below the

surface, and that unity is more lasting than the diversity, because you may stop the motion of the car, turn out the light and stop heat, but still there will be electricity. These are the manifestations, and the manifestations are less lasting, less permanent than the thing of which these are manifestations. Atoms and molecules will last for ever, but the suns, moons and stars will vanish. They will be destroyed, the earth will be destroyed. Similarly, our bodies will be destroyed, and the forces will remain in the form of energy, the souls will remain in the form of energy—the minds will remain.

If we thus analyse this phenomenal universe, we find that as we go nearer to the source of energy, we come to unity. Starting from multiplicity we go step by step towards oneness, because oneness is the goal. From one many has come into existence, and the knowledge by which we can understand that one Substance is supreme. You may call that Substance anything you like, but that, makes no difference. To know that substance is to understand the truth of nature.

When we study our own nature, we find there so many powers, emotions, senses, perceptions, thoughts and ideas. Where do these come from? They are various phenomena that spring from a common source. You may not know that common source, yet it is your true Self—that is One. You can analyse yourself in this way, for instance: You are a thinker when you think; you are a seer

when you see; you are a listener when you listen; and when you question you are an inquirer; when you hold anything you are doing something different, and so on. Now, all these powers are in yourself—you are the one that is doing all these things. Now, who are you? That you do not know. You ought to know that, because you yourself are the master. You let the hand move, and it moves; you let it stay in one place and it stays; you eat and digest your food, and if you did not want to digest you would not digest and then you have indigestion. Mind has tremendous power over body, and when you have indigestion hold the thought that you will have good digestion and you will have good digestion. These are facts,—you can experiment yourself.

But who are you? You do not know. You do not know that you existed before and that you are going to exist afterwards. So long as this diversity of existence appears to be separate and distinct from everything else, we grope in ignorance. It is not right knowledge. Science tells us it is ignorance, and that ignorance is the cause of all these troubles, and therefore the Ruler of Death said: "He who sees diversity, instead of unity, goes from death to death". He has not gained experience enough yet, he will have to be born again and again in order to learn the Truth, and the highest state of knowledge is that in which that unity, that one substance is revealed out of which all these things have come into existence, and when that

knowledge is gained, we know who we are and what we are.

We are not separate from that Substance, and that Substance is immortal. Death does not attack it—it cannot. Death is only on the surface. For instance, when the sun will be destroyed, it will be dead, but the atoms and molecules and energy which make up the sun will continue to exist in the universe.

The body may go to pieces, but the Substance out of which the body is made is birthless and deathless. So, the Substance out of which our conscious entity is made, the intelligent thinker or self-conscious being who acts, thinks, performs various works, desires, cannot die. Desires themselves may be dead. One desire rises and then goes down. Perhaps, the desire which you had when you were five years old does not exist now—it is dead and gone for ever, but you are not dead. Other desires have taken possession of you, taken the place of that particular desire. So, death does not attack anything which is below the surface of the phenomenal existence, and the Reality of the universe is beyond death, is always immortal, and changeless, and when we have realized ourselves as parts of that one Substance which is by itself immortal and unchangeable we have become deathless. We can rise above the realm of death only by knowing our immortal nature. The realm of death extends so far as phenomena go, but when we come to the casual states we come to the unity; in that oneness there is no death.

Here, you will notice that we are so many people sitting now. Each one of us is a conscious entity and each one has a particular physical condition and features. Two faces do not look alike; two eyes are not alike; two ears are not alike; two mouths are not the same in shape and size—they are diverse. But when we think of the conscious entity in each one of us, we will find there equality. One mind may be more intelligent than another; one mind may have certain desires which another may not have; one mind may be thinking of household duties, another of office work, another of his or her personal affairs, but as self-conscious entities we are all the same. That is a relation we ordinarily do not see. In fact, we are like so many centres through which this conscious entity is manifesting its powers. If we can think of a conscious entity over our head and sending down rays into our brains and making each individual entity feel that it is a conscious entity, then we will understand the unity in variety. The sun may have innumerable rays, but they come from one common source. Similarly, all these conscious entities are but the rays of one big cosmic conscious entity, and being parts of that cosmic conscious entity, we cannot be subject to death and birth if we know that. But if we do not know that, if we think of ourselves as separate and independent entities, we have come to gain experience and we do not see that unity which is behind all phenomena. We will go on gaining experiences of various kinds until we come to that highest

knowledge, and that knowledge will make us free from birth and death.

How that knowledge is to be gained? That higher knowledge of oneness cannot be acquired by impure minds, impure intellects and impure hearts. *Mind, intellect and heart must be purified before we can gain that higher knowledge.* Those whose minds and hearts and intellects are not purified and are covered by the dirt of desires, passions, hatred, jealousy and all earthly ambitions, cannot see that oneness. If you see oneness in everything you cannot be ambitious for that which you think as the highest, is already in you. Such state of mind kills all ambition, and, therefore, God has no ambition. Christ never had any ambition; Buddha never had any ambition.

It may frighten those who are on the plane of ordinary mortals, who are slaves of ambition. They may say, if there be no ambition, I do not want to hear that philosophy, I do not care for that. Well, you may not care for that, but you will get a lesson. You are still on the surface—you do not see unity—you are running after diversity. You will have to come again and again before you learn that Truth before you can appreciate it. That is not the fault of the Truth, that is not the fault of the philosophy, but it is the fault of yourself because you are not ready yet to see that oneness in everything. You see different things, one is smaller or bigger than another, and so you are ambitious to get the larger one and

leave the smaller one. And when you see that from the minutest atom to the biggest sun everything has come from that one source, the diversity disappears.

You may throw away one flower as very ugly or one of a very unpleasant odour—another flower is very beautiful, but they have come from the common source. Your nostrils do not appreciate the odourless ones, or your eyes do not appreciate what other eyes may appreciate and call most beautiful. Beauty varies in every country, according to the standard of the people, and so the ideals vary. What you may think as the highest and most beneficial thing in America, may not be thought so in Europe, may not be beneficial at all to a man in China. He will think what a fool that American must be, and you may think the same of a Chinaman. Well, both we are fools, and such is the world. We have not the power to appreciate the standards of others, and they have not the powers to appreciate our standards—that is the way we are living, and so long as we are living on this plane of diversity we must have ambition. But there is a plane higher than that—that is the plane of Divinity where all ambitions cease to exist, as all desires are fulfilled there. After reaching that state we cannot live like a mortal slave of ambition. If you see oneness how can you be jealous of another? Now you will have a constant flow of love for everything. Love means expression of oneness. When you feel that everything is one thing, and when light and

darkness become one, why you love darkness just as much as you love light. Each has its beauty. You love the night just as much as the day. Night has its charm and so day has also its charm. We have trained our minds to become one-sided and therefore we see good in some things only and reject the rest. But a high-souled one, who has seen the divine beauty of oneness, loves every living creature. Therefore, there is no good or bad before his eyes. There is no sinner or saint before his eyes; he sees not the surface, not the phenomena, but he goes deep below the forms and he sees the background and there his eyes are fixed.

You may see the face of an ugly man or an ugly woman, but behind that ugly face there is the glory of the Lord; but those who are fascinated by certain symmetrical faces will call that ugly, but in the eyes of God there is nothing ugly. Which is reality, ugliness or that oneness? What appeals to us, to our inner soul, to our heart? That oneness, and therefore, that is more lasting, that is more divine while the other thing is on the surface—it is temporary, delusive. And this delusion proceeds from ignorance. That ignorance is nothing but the knowledge of diversity alone, and not of unity. This knowledge of diversity of each separate thing proceeds from ignorance—ignorance of knowledge. But when we have understood that knowledge we love everything, and at that time we become immortal, we have transcended death. So, what shall we do? We



should purify our hearts and souls by putting aside all these things, by right discrimination, and by being devoted to that One and putting our minds away from diversity. Anything that will make us feel separate from each other we must avoid for the sake of that oneness; that will help us, that will purify our heart and soul, and then we shall be able to see that oneness. Then we shall see that one Being manifesting through many, and that will be the means by which we will transcend death and go to the realm of immortals.

So, we have understood what is meant by "going from death to death," and those whose hearts and souls are not purified will go from death to death, will be born again and again until they have reached perfection. You see evolution means change. We are subject to evolution here because we are not perfect yet, but when we come to that knowledge of oneness we have outgrown evolution. Evolution is finished them. The ultimate aim evolution is to unify, to bring to harmony to one end; and that is the goal of evolution—perfection. *Perfection must be one; there cannot be many perfections.* Realization of that one Substance which appears as many, and this is the theme of this philosophy and of all religions. Christianity teaches God is one, but it does not know what God is. So other religions teach God is one, but where is that God? They say, above the heavens. But He is right here and everywhere. They tell the truth, but unintelligently; they do not let you think and find that one God in everything. They do not

know the means, they do not know the way, Christ alone knew it, but the Christians do not know it because they are led astray by their peculiar ideas. Christ taught: "Ye shall know the Truth, and Truth shall make you free."<sup>1</sup> But where is that Truth, how are we going to get it? We do not find it in the churches. That is the difficulty. All religions teach the same thing, that one Truth which is immortal, divine, birthless, and deathless; but it is Vedânta alone which tells you that that immortal, divine, deathless, and birthless Being is not very far from you, but you are a part of that Being. See Him in your own soul, in your own heart. You do not have to go into a temple or into a church to find him—your body is the temple. Christ said: "The Kingdom of Heaven is within you," but we do not understand it. Vedânta will help us to understand that Truth. Truth is one always.

And if that Truth is within us, where does it lie, and how does it live? This true Self, or this Divine essence dwells in the midst of the heart, in the centre of the heart of every individual. Here "heart" includes all our internal functions, like mental functions, intellectual functions, emotions, volition, etc., all are included by the word—by the word "heart." "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God."<sup>2</sup> The heart means inner nature, and in the centre of this inner nature there

1. **St. John**, VIII, 32.

2. **St. Matthew**, V, 7.

is small Self—small in size—not so big as this gross body, but very small, perhaps about an inch of space you will find in the cave of our heart. That space is filled with self-effulgent light, and there He dwells—not in the material heart, or physical heart, but in that inner nature—in that centre of the mental plane. He is the Lord, He is the Master of all mental functions, mental activities, sense powers, sense organs and physical body. He governs everything. He is not separate from your true Self. He is the same as your true Self. You are the master of your body; you are the master of your mind; you are the master of your sense, organs sense powers—ruler of your past and director of your future. You are at present master of yourself. Whatever you did in the past, enjoyed, suffered and experienced in the past, you have governed that; and whatever you will enjoy and suffer and experience in future, you will be the ruler of that also. And, therefore, you are the master, and that master is the divine Self. When one sees that, one becomes free from fear of death, because that soul gets enlightened, past and future appear to him like the present, eternal present. There is no such thing as past, no such thing as future. Anything that goes behind the field, behind the curtain of our present state of consciousness is either past or future—that is all. But if that curtain is lifted, and there be one flow, there is no past, no future. You can study your past just as you are studying your present if you have time enough. But you have not time to think of that, consequently, you

do not think—you do not know anything about it. You have no time to think about your future, consequently the future is dark to you. Leave all the present things and go into your own room and think of your future. The future will be revealed to you, the curtain will be drawn up and the realm of the future will be open to you. Do not be rushed to death in the present if you want to know the future, because this busy life shuts out everything. I have lived here long enough to know the American life. There is no word for American life but busy, rush, hustle. What does it amount to? I do not see any reason in it. To run after something, running from early morning to midnight for something, they do not know what they are running for. They think it is a gain to them, but they are fooling themselves unconsciously. They never think of this; they never look inside. They lack in the power of introspection. These people cannot sit still for five minutes, they get tired out and run to do something. They have tremendous activity and energy—but most of them is wasted to get material things. Of course, there are some solitary examples who devote a little of their attention and time to understand their own nature, to study themselves, but their number is very small indeed. The ordinary people are afraid of everything. They are afraid of death, afraid of their life, or everything, because they have not the strength. Why they would not have strength? Because they have no knowledge of themselves. Knowledge is strength. When you know a thing you have

mastered that thing, but so long as you do not know that thing you are afraid of it. And fear of death proceeds from that ignorance, because you do not know what is meant by death and what will happen after death. The moment we know it we are free from that fear, and, therefore, one who knows that Master, that Ruler of the past and future, Ruler of the body and mind who is dwelling in the centre of the heart, small in size (*angustha-mâtram Purusham-mahântam*), has become free from death. And that Ruler of the body and mind and intellect and senses is immortal.

“This is that,” (*Etadvai tat*). The Ruler of Death here answers the question: “What is Immortal? What does not die?” He says that which is the Ruler of your body, the Ruler of your mind, Governor of your past and future, dwelling in your heart as the centre of your being, that is immortal.

You see each individual soul is a centre, and that centre is immortal. It has its covering garments, which are mortal. The centre is permanent, but the garment of the mind, garment of mental functions, emotions, thoughts, ideas which cluster around that centre are constantly changing like a kaleidoscope, but the centre is the permanent entity, just as your body is more permanent than the garments. Tomorrow you wear a red garment, next day a blue or a green or a white one. These garments are changing constantly. Every spring you have a new fashion, hats

changed, feathers changed, but your head continues to remain as the same. Similarly, as your body is the centre where all these different colours and customs cluster, so the soul is the centre, more permanent. That immortal Substance (*Atman*) is more permanent, but these thoughts, ideas and desires are like your garments which change as the fashion changes.

As you take a new body, new thoughts arise. Old thoughts leave you. You put on a new garment of the body in every birth. At this time we have come to this country. Perhaps, in our next birth we may go to some other planet. Who can tell? We may not have this kind of body at all. We may have a watery or etherial body. That will be much better, for we will not have to bother with our clothes if we have an etherial body. That will be a great relief.

That Ruler of the body and mind is luminous, without any smoke or cloud in it. There is no fog, no smoke, no cloud, He is self-luminous, and He is the Ruler of the past and future. He exists today; He will exist tomorrow and He existed yesterday, and this is the immortal part in us; but we cannot see it unless we have learnt to withdraw our minds from the diverse phenomena, unless our mind is purified.

Ordinary minds are scattered all over the world. Everything we see we try to get hold of like an octopus and try to get and possess it. And here an illustration is given! As water falling from a

high mountain on a rock scatters all over into small drops and sprays. If it constantly falls from a great height on a rock, it does not flow any more but it scatters off in all directions. So our mental functions have fallen on the hard rock of our self-consciousness and have become scattered all over the world, we cannot collect them. And that is the condition of the mind of an ordinary mortal,—scattered. But when that water falls upon any other mass of water, it falls in a constant flow and it is no longer scattered, but it mixes with the ocean or with that water. If our mind, instead of falling on self-consciousness, goes toward the ocean of Divine unity then it will no longer be scattered, but it will be unified, and it will flow into the ocean and become part of it; and that would be the state when we would realize the oneness between ourselves and the Divinity;—then we will say: “I and my Father are one.”

## CHAPTER XIII.

### BODY AND THE SOUL

The Ruler of Death compares the human body to a palace of the Emperor or the King, who is our true Self. The doors are the doors of the senses, There are eleven doors, and the sense powers are the door-keepers. The doors of senses, such as eyes, ears, nostrils, mouth that make seven, and there are three in the body including the navel, generating and excreting organs and one in the centre of the brain. The eleventh door is not known to ordinary mortals. It is known only to the Yogis who are great seers of Truth. That door opens at the time of communion with the Infinite. It is closed to ordinary mortals; they do not know anything about it which lies in the centre of the brain. So, it is called in Sanskrit the *Brahmarandhra*, the seat of the Infinite; the absolute Beng.<sup>3</sup>

And this palace belongs to the secondless (*advitiya*) King or Emperor who is our Soul. The King, possessing as he does intelligence, guides and directs all the attendants. Mind and

३। पुरमेकादशद्वारमज्ज्वावक्रचेतसः ।

अनुद्वाय न शोचति विमुक्तश्च विमुच्यते । एतदेतत् ॥

—Katha-Upanishad, 2.2.1.



intellect, emotions and feelings are mere attendants who are serving their Master, the King.

Sense powers are like the door-keepers. They receive sensations and perceptions when we come in contact with the external objects. These sensations, perceptions and feelings are all presented as offerings to the great King who is the ruler and governor in the palace. The light of intelligence which the King sheds does not change. It is always the same. It is never crooked, but straight. Minds of ordinary mortals are crooked. It is very difficult to straighten the minds. They are crooked on account of worldly desires or selfishness. The moment we become selfish, our mind is not straight but crooked, and those who are living on the plane of selfishness are supremely crooked-minded. You cannot do anything with them. They have no straight-forwardness, no courage, no strength of character; they are mean, hypocritical and have all kinds of sneaky ways. They never come forward like brave soldiers. But the King is made up of different stuff. Even in an ordinary mind, whose intellect is crooked, the King, the true Self, is always the same. The true Self is always straight-forward and perfect. There is no blemish or flaw that can tarnish his being.

By serving the King one rises above all sorrow. Service of the King is necessary. How are we to serve Him? By constant remembrance of Him. There is no other way by which we can serve the King, the Ruler of this palace of the body. But if

the ego begins to think of the King (the ego is only an attendant) and begins to meditate upon the Emperor or the true Self, that would be the best service the ego can render. There is no other way of serving Him.

Meditation means *constant remembrance of the Ideal*. The perfect, divine Self must be meditated upon, must be constantly thought of, and that constant thinking or meditation is the service. One who does it, becomes eventually free from all sorrow and grief and ultimately attains to perfect freedom *on this plane*. Freedom is the emancipation of the soul from the bondage of selfishness, ignorance, desire, ambition, hatred, jealousy, all earthly passions and tendencies. When we become free from these in this life, after death we attain to perfection, and that perfection is what is meant by 'salvation' (*moksa* or *mukti*) according to Vedânta. Those who attain to that knowledge do not come back on this plane, are not born again. Those who do not reach that state will have to come back again and again to fulfil the earthly desires, which we deeply cherish. We will have to do them over again, because every time we do those things we create impressions. Those acts leave impressions upon our minds, and those impressions remain with us even when we are dead and gone, that is, even when the body perishes. And those impressions become the seeds of future desires and acts of similar nature.

Some people have an idea that salvation will begin in the life beyond death,—no matter how we live

in this life. They think if we simply have faith in some doctrines or dogmas, we will attain salvation in the end. But that is not possible. *Salvation must begin in this life. Perfection must be reached here; and when salvation is not reached here in this life, we cannot expect to have it after death.* Therefore, we must strive hard to get it in this life first if we wish to attain to salvation or perfection after death.

So, that is the kind of service and by that service, constant meditation and constant thinking of the King in the palace of this gross physical body, one can attain to freedom from sorrow, and all other imperfections, as I have described, and after death such being does not come back to the plane of mortals.

In each body you will find a king. There are not many kings—but there is one king. The king in the individual bodies is the same. The Divinity, the divine spark within us is equal. It is the same in every individual. The egos vary, the minds vary, the mental functions also are different, intellectual functions are also of different degrees, but the true Self, which is behind mind, intellect, sense powers, feelings and emotions, is divine, and it always is the same everywhere. It exists not only in human beings, but also in lower animals, in vegetables, in minerals, in fact in every atom of the universe. We can understand that universal substance or universal Being—when we have realized our true Self which is beyond mind, intellect and sense powers.

That all-pervading Self, which dwells within us dwells also in the sun. The sun does not mean merely the material form of the particles of matter, but that combination of the material particles which dwells in the infinite Being. In fact, its life and soul is the infinite Being. The same infinite Being, or the supreme Self dwells in space, in the moon, in the stars, on this earth, in fire, in air, in water—everywhere. It is in the food, in the vegetables, minerals and animals. Whatever we drink, or enjoy, and everything that we possess is pervaded by that supreme Self. Ordinary mortals cannot see Him, because their spiritual eyes are not open. We must not think that our physical eyes are the only eyes that we have. We have a higher eye, a spiritual eye. This supreme Being, this true Self cannot be perceived by the physical eye, nor by any of the sense powers which reveal the external and individual objects, but by means of spiritual vision which alone can reveal it.

Ordinary scientists may say: "Where is your supreme Spirit; why do not you see it?" They do not know that the true Self is beyond the reach of the sense powers. If they knew it as such, they would not have asked such questions. Sense powers exist in and through that Being, that true Self, but sense powers can never reveal it. Some people think: "Why, if there were such a thing as soul, we could have invented some instruments and could have weighed it and got hold of it in some way". But that is not possible,

because it is finer than ether. It can go anywhere in no time. It is beyond time and beyond space relations. It is so fine that these ordinary minds cannot think of it, not to speak of their understanding it or measuring it or catching hold of it. It is born of eternal Truth. In fact, It is the eternal Truth itself. It is vast, immutable, indestructible. It is not many, but one. This phenomenal universe is the kingdom of One and not of many. We may appear as 'many' on account of the manifestations—just as the rays of the sun may appear in various colours, but all colours proceed from the rays of the sun, as all sounds are nothing but different degrees of vibration of the air or air particles. So all these egos in mortals, human beings, in animals, in the minutest animatcules are nothing but manifestations, the expressions of One. The source is One.

In the last chapter, I have described the unity in diversity. We will have to see oneness behind multiplicity, and when we have seen that, we have realized the eternal Truth. In other words it means we have realized God. But it is the most difficult task to perform. Nevertheless this should be our ideal.

The incoming and outgoing breath are not the means of our existence. Breath is not the only means by which the mortals live on this plane. Breath (*Prâna*) is not the same as Soul or true Spirit. True Spirit is something different. You see in the Jewish religion, you will find in the Old

**Testament:** "God breathed the breath of air into his nostrils and he became a living Soul". That gives an idea that breath is the same thing as Soul, and in the book of Job you will find that the breath comes from the Almighty, and, in fact, the Jewish religion of ancient times did not believe in the existence of soul as separate from breath, and there were old, superstitious people in different countries who had the same belief. The old Jewish belief was that the breath comes from God and after death goes back to God. It is true as much of human beings, as of animals—and there remains nothing after death. That was their idea. But in India you will find that the great seers of Truth rose far above that conception. They realized the true nature of the Soul as distinct from breath and declared it as such in unequivocal terms. So you will find in this passage the explanation of that incoming and outgoing breath is not the same thing as Soul; but the Soul dwells in the midst of all the aspirations and inspirations, and all the senses and sense powers worship that Being who dwells in the midst of our being. The breath may stop, but still the Soul continues to exist. The departed spirit does not breathe, yet it lives. So breath does not mean the same thing as Soul. Even in our life-time we can stop the inspiration and respiration, say, for a few seconds or few minutes. We do not die at that time. There are Yogis who can stop breathing for days and for weeks, still they do not die. So the breathing process is not the same thing as Soul,

but the breathing process is caused by a certain force, and that force, that power dwells in the Soul. It is the Soul that possesses that power and makes the organs breathe. On this plane the Soul manifests that power. That power is called the power of *Prâna*. It is the life-force, the vital force, its outward expression. When it manifests through the nerves and nerve centers and the lungs, external symptom is found in the respiratory process. But the power of *Prâna* or life-force which causes the lungs to move, the diaphragm to move, is in the Soul. It is not in the body. It is not merely a mechanical process, but behind the mechanical process there is a power. Ordinary anatomists or physiologists, who do not know the secret, do not understand that power, and deny its existence.

But when the king departs from this palace or leaves it what happens then? At the time of death all the attendants and servants follow Him and leave the body. Just as when a queen bee leaves the hive all drones and other bees will follow her and the hive will be empty. In the same manner when the king goes out of this palace or deserts it all the attendants like sense powers, mental powers, intellectual powers and vital powers follow the king and leave the palace too. It is then said that the man is dead. Therefore death means that state when the King of the palace and his attendants have deserted it.

So, here we must not forget that this body is not the same as the Soul, and we must also remember

that the Soul is not the result of the mechanical process or activities of the organs of this physical body. The materialistic theory or the theory of the Agnostics that the Soul is the results of the combination of matter and material forces governed by mechanical laws is a logical blunder. How can a combination of matter produce such a thing as Soul? Who has made that combination? There are different organs in the system. Now, these organs are put together, each being assigned its proper place. Who has put them together? The combination itself cannot put them together. Take a man-made machine: there are different wheels, different parts of the machine. Now, those parts, if you put them in a lump, would not join and combine and reach their proper places and form a perfect machine. It requires an intelligent hand to put those different parts in their proper places, and then the power will come through it. So a machine may run mechanically, but it must be put together first. Now, who has put together the organs—the different parts of the machine of the human body? That question has never been answered by materialistic thinkers who deny the existence of the Soul as a separate entity. On the contrary, they beg the question by stating that the combination has put the different parts together as if the combination itself is a living substance, intelligent something which existed before the parts were combined, or the parts were put together. No rational thinker, can however, accept such approach as scientific.



The organic functions may be described as mechanical to a certain extent, but beyond a certain point they are no longer mechanical. They are governed by laws and they are directed and guided by some intelligent force. You may describe the process of digestion, for instance, that after you have eaten some thing, it goes down the alimentary canal and falls into the stomach mechanically, and then the secretions come and digestion goes on. But why shall the secretions come? Why shall digestion go on? It is not the food that produces the secretion—that draws it mechanically; if it did, then nobody would have any disturbance, or indigestion if any of the organs be deranged. But who cures them? Who makes the organs in perfect condition? It is the Soul—the Soul who has created these organs. The body is created by the Soul. For an illustration, take an oyster. Some person may think that the shell of an oyster has been created by some body else outside of the oyster, and the shell is the cause of the oyster. That idea is foolish. If any person thinks that the shell is the cause of the oyster as the bark of the tree is the cause of the latter, that would be a ridiculous statement. And all materialistic thinkers are doing the same way. They put the cart before the horse, and delude the people. But the real argument would be that the oyster creates its own shell and lives there. A crab creates a shell, so the soul creates the body with its most intricate organism and lives there. The whole nervous system—the brain and nerves—is manufactured

by the Soul. The Soul has the power to manufacture in this way, and then it lives there. Why does it do so? To fulfil a certain purpose, to gain a certain experience, to enjoy and realize the results of its own thoughts and deeds; and when that purpose for which it has manufactured the particular form, is fulfilled, it leaves it. The king then departs and takes all the attendants with him. The Soul is the king, which departs and exists even after death.

Death means *only the throwing away of the garment of the body*. Just as we throw away the old garments and put on new clothes, so the Soul throws away the old garment of the body after fulfilling a certain purpose, and then it puts on another garment<sup>4</sup> manufacturing another form.

What form does it manufacture? That form would be the result of its own thoughts and deeds. The king does not like to live in a palace which would not harmonize with the thoughts, ideas and desires which the king possesses. All the desires that we have, all the thoughts and ideas that we cherish will remain with us, but everything else we will have to leave. The sense organs we cannot take with us, but we will take the power by

४। (क) वासांसि जीर्णानि यथा विहाय नवानि गृह्णाति नरोऽप्यरानि ।

तथा शरीराणि विहाय जीर्णान्यन्यानि संयाति नवानि देही ॥

—Bhagabat Gitā, II. 22.

(ख) योनिमन्त्रे प्रपद्यन्ते शरीरत्वाय देहिनः ॥

—Katha-Upanishad, 2.2.7.

which we can draw from the environments particles of atoms and manufacture the organs, like the organs of hearing, organ of sight, organ of smell, the brain and nervous system. From one minute particle all this beautiful system will come out just by cellular development. But a cell divides because it is a living cell. If it were a dead cell, it would not divide, it would not produce any organ. So that minute substance, that etherial particle which possesses such a wonderful power is indestructible. It exists after death and manufactures other forms, just in the same way as it has manufactured the present form.

When we understand this point, that is, that which is separate from the body yet dwells in the body and leaves at the time of death and carries all the attendants with it at the time of death, we have understood our true nature and then only we have conquered death. There is no fear then, no fear that death can affect us in any way. Because we fear what we do not know; but when we know a thing we are no longer afraid of it, and we know the different ways, we find the means by which we can get rid of it.

In India you will notice that there are persons who have conquered death during their lifetime, and there have been instances where the Yogis could throw away their body voluntarily not by committing suicide but by consciously giving up the body. They will sit in *Samâdhi*, go into this state of superconsciousness and withdraw all the powers

from the different organs, and leave the body just as a crab would leave its shell or as a snake sheds its old skin and throws it off. And so the Soul stands outside of it and leaves the body letting everybody know beforehand that he is going consciously to pass out at such and such a time and under such conditions, without having any fear, but with the supreme joy at heart that he has fulfilled the mission of his life. Who can do that? Only a realized man can follow this course. When one can separate himself from the shell of this physical body, it means that he has really conquered death.

We do not need to conquer death by holding on to some superstitious idea or doctrine or method. Study Râja Yoga and there you will find the scientific process by which you can withdraw yourself from the body and conquer death. You can conquer death not by false belief or faith in some object or some being, or getting hold of some queer idea. That way is not healthy nor is that rational. But if you can withdraw yourself from the sense organs and the body, and can stand like a witness outside of it, you have conquered death. Nobody can kill you then.

"The fire cannot burn you, the air cannot dry you, water cannot moisten you, swords cannot pierce you",<sup>5</sup> you are indestructible, immortal. When

५। नैनं क्षिन्दन्ति शस्त्राणि नैनं दहति पावकः ।

न चैनं क्लेदयन्त्यापो न शोषयति मारुतः ॥

—Bhagabat Gitâ, II. 23.

the body is cut into pieces, that will not hurt you. When that kind of knowledge will come then you will be able to conquer death not by going into the grave and believing in some queer ideas. Why should we be fool ourselves? But we must proceed step by step, inch by inch and try to devote our life. We know that everything will end in death, so why should not we try to conquer death first? What is the use of doing other things besides this if we have not conquered death first? What is the use of doing other things first? We will not be able to take them with us. It is only a kind of delusion that by doing all these works and imagining all these things we will be so happy. Where is happiness? Happiness comes to him who has conquered death or who has no fear of death. Some do not like to see a dead body, do not like to think of any dead relative, they are frightened. The man of business, who may be of great wealth and great intellect, when he finds any relative passing away, will get nervous prostration, would not be able to eat anything to attend to his business, and would not know what to do, because that horror comes and he thinks: "I am doing all these things and to what end?" Everything will be swept away at the door of death. So the first duty which a sensible man or woman must perform is to overcome death—the fear of death, by separating himself or herself from this gross, material, physical body. Conquer death. That is the advice which the Ruler of Death gives to this young man who went to the abode of death

and asked three vital questions. Yama also shows him the method by which it can be done. But very few can follow this because they are too active, too much distracted by surface attractions of this phenomenal world. When we enjoy the beautiful colouring, or nice music we forget death for the time being. It is true that it is very beautiful, but we can enjoy a larger and more lasting beauty when we have overcome the fear of death. When we know that we are not going to die, but we are immortal, everything we will enjoy a thousand times, perhaps a million times more than we do now. That is the most wonderful part and no one can disprove it. So, if we wish to enjoy life, first of all we will have to overcome death or the fear of death, and then live in the world like an immortal soul without being anxious for anything that is related only to the surface. Think of what you can take with you at the time of death. You will not be annihilated or destroyed; you will not be reduced to nothingness. If we could, it would be much better, but we are bound by laws. The laws would not let us go into nothingness, because something cannot be reduced to nothing. If we exist today we shall have to exist in the future too. Existence can never become non-existence. That is one of the laws of nature. And so those are deluding themselves who thinking that after death nothing will remain, enjoy their life here and now without thinking of what will happen after death. We can ignore for sometime the question of our future

existence, but we cannot evade it for all time. We are in a phenomenal world and we are fettered by some laws as rigid and inexorable as getting burnt if we put our finger into fire. It is exactly like that. You may do anything you like, but every action will bring in its train an inevitable reaction which you will have to reap willingly or unwillingly. The reaction will be good or bad according to the nature of your own thought and action. The laws of compensation, of retribution, of causation and of action and reaction are inexorable and can hardly be avoided. And that something cannot be reduced to nothing is another law of nature.

Now what continues to exist after departing this palace of the body is the Soul. That is the immortal part in us. A man does not live by inspiration nor by respiration of breath alone, but there is something more in him which guides and directs this inspiration and respiration of breath. By that we are all alive. What is that power? We will have to find it out in ourselves. No science will teach us that. We will have to study our own self to find that out. Science can only describe the process by which these organic functions are performed; that is all. But what is that power and where does it lie? Science does not know anything about it. Physiology, anatomy, biology will not tell you anything about it, even though you spend your lifetime on it. They are all guessing when they come to that point, because it is beyond their sense perception. They are absolu-

tely in the dark. They have certain theories and make a hypothesis and may say it must be so and so. Another man says it must be this while the third man says that. And that is exactly what they are doing all the time. It has merit in it no doubt, but we should also try to proceed deeper than it. When we correctly analyse science, we find that science is within the realm of senses. That which we can perceive by sense powers can be described in a systematic way. Science does that, but there is a point beyond which science can not guide us. Shall we then stop there simply because science fails to penetrate further or shall we undertake the task of proceeding still further by some new means? Obviously the latter course is attractive to the more adventurous aspirants after truth. That is why we need cultivate and sharpen our intellect by concentration, and inward thinking which will enable us to discover the truth for ourselves. And that is necessary. So those who have already studied science should now devote their time in studying their own nature, in concentrating their own minds, in meditating upon the King in the palace of the gross physical body, to find out by what power we are living. Stop your inspiration and respiration if you can and then try to discover if there is a power in you which is the cause of your respiratory process. Control that power, the breathing process and see what force is behind it. You will not be dead just do it gradually. You do not have to go to any laboratory to find that out. Your own body will be your



laboratory. Watch carefully what happens. Study inch by inch that power of *Prâna* or life force which sustains you. Then you will see how the life-force is expressing itself in every minute atom and molecule. You will then know there is no such thing as dead matter. Then you would not need any further proof or evidence. Ordinary people say: "What proof is there that there is such a thing as soul power?" Your proof is your own self; that is the best proof, the most convincing proof. You need not ask that question then, when you have found it. Therefore, that by which we are called living beings, intelligent beings, is in our Soul. The Soul possesses that. The Soul combines all these material particles, puts the organs in their proper places and produces a perfect harmony. No man-made machine can be more perfect than the human machine. It is the most intricate and the most perfect machine that you can imagine, and the Soul has the power to produce it. If you are in perfect health you will see what a wonderful harmony there is. But when you are abusing it, you are wrong from beginning to end, and consequently you are suffering, you have ill health, you have a diseased mind, or diseased intellect—everything is diseased. Disease means *dis-ease—not ease—no happiness*. All is trouble and anxiety. Everything is upset. And therefore get back to your simple nature and leave all these artificial thoughts and deeds; reduce yourself to your simplest, natural way; come back yourself and find out how glorious it is. Then you

will see the harmony, then you will understand what Soul does. We have become too artificial, no wonder that we should deny the existence of Soul. Our Soul is in dollars and cents, in greenbacks there is our Soul. We put it outside in the pocket-book and protect it; and if anyone takes it away, we have lost our Soul. No wonder that we have been living in a miserable way, a deluded way, making fools of ourselves. Let us use our common sense which God has given. Common sense does not mean that we must eat and drink and enjoy life in a thousand foolish ways; common sense will tell us to come to our natural state, bring about absolute harmony of mind and body and understand our true Self and see what force, what power is making all these things. our common sense will help us in doing that, then we make the best use of that sense for we expect God will be revealed to us. Otherwise, when we do not understand our Self, which is the nearest, how can we understand God. When we do not understand the finite thing like this body, and like our mind, or the power which is keeping the body, we expect to see God, the infinite, vast, beyond everything! That is not possible. Therefore Vedânta teaches first of all to know yourself. Start from that, then everything will be known, but not until then. You cannot know the infinite Self and then know your self. It is the wrong way, a round-about way. You cannot know God first and then know yourself—that is too long. *You cannot know God without knowing yourself.* When you know the king,

when you know your own immortal nature, then you have a right to know God—not until then. So, first of all we should try to know ourselves, to separate ourselves from this gross body, to conquer death, and then we shall be able to know God, to enjoy everlasting happiness and eternal life. That eternal life will begin here on this plane first and everything else will come afterwards.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### PERFECTION TO THE SOUL

We remember the question which was asked by Nachiketâ, the young seeker after Truth, who went to the abode of death and visited the Ruler of Death: "*Yeyam prete vichikitsâ manusye, astityeke nâyamastiti chaikc.*"

"There is this doubt—when a man dies some people say that he is dead and gone for ever, while others believe that he still continues to live; which of these is true?"

We have been listening so long to the various questions concerning the true nature of the Soul and its condition after death, and here the Ruler of Death touches that particular point which the seeker after Truth wanted to know. He says: "Now I shall tell you the most secret Truth; the greatest of all secrets by knowing which one attains to the highest Truth and becomes immortal, but those who do not know it come again on this plane of existence, i.e., are born again."

Here the Ruler of Death refers to that law of reincarnation, or transmigration as it was understood and explained by certain thinkers; but in Vedânta the idea of reincarnation has been considered to be most scientific and most rational, and this is one of the oldest expressions of this

idea. Some people believe that in the Vedas, there is no mention of the idea of reincarnation, but here we find that it has been described very clearly, as also in other *Upanishads* and in other writings. And then he goes on to describe that secret.

He says: "Those who do not understand the eternal and immortal Truth, the Self, are subject to the law of reincarnation, the law of evolution, but when that Truth is realized, the knower of that Truth transcends all laws. He is no longer subject to reincarnation, nor to evolution; he reaches the goal of reincarnation or rebirth and also evolution".<sup>1</sup>

In order to understand this clearly, we have to know, first, why we have come to this world—why we are living this way, and under what laws we are working and what laws are governing us. We have come to this world to fulfil a certain purpose. We are born with certain powers. Desires have been our motive powers, incentives for all the works that we are performing during our life-time. If we had no desires, we could not have accomplished anything; we would have been like stocks or stones, like a chair or a table. The desires make us human beings. Even lower animals have

१ । यस्तु विशानवान् भवत्यमनस्कः सदा शुचिः ।

न स तत्पदमाप्नोति संसारं चाधिगच्छति ॥

यस्तु विशानवान् भवति समनस्कः सदा शुचिः ।

स तु तत् पदमाप्नोति यस्माद्भूयो न जायते ॥

—Katha-Upanishad, 1.3.7-8.

not the ability to express all their desires, although they may have desires in a very limited form. Their desires are merely for sense objects, for food and drink, etc. But human desires are different from merely animal desires of senses like hunger, thirst and procreation—human desires are multifarious. We are desiring all the time. We cannot stop our desires. If we try to stop, we fail. All our desires are not fulfilled. If we can imagine a time when all our desires,—physical, mental, intellectual and spiritual—are fulfilled, then there would be an end of our earthly existence too. In other words, nothing will remain to be accomplished at the time when we reach *perfection*.

Perfection means *the fulfilment of all desires*. When the highest goal is reached, there is no other desire left unfulfilled. But so long as we are living on the mortal plane, on the plane of relativity or of imperfection, we are full of desires, and those desires are never fully gratified. We try to gratify them once, but again they rise, we cannot stop their recurring course. That is our earthly existence. If we examine our lives, we shall find that it is so. Day after day we are eating and drinking, sleeping and enjoying the pleasures, but still there is no end of the process. The more we eat and drink and enjoy, the more we have such desires, and when that end comes, does it come with death? Death may attack this body, we may have to give up this body, but the desires are not in the body, they are deeper. They

are rooted in the mind, they are in our being, they are in our soul-life, and they exist so long as our own being, the soul-life, will continue to exist. If we could annihilate our soul-life at death, then it would have been possible to be free from all desires, but we cannot do so. It is absolutely impossible to get rid of our own being, because being can never become non-being. That is the law of nature. Existence can never become non-existence. If we exist today, we shall have to continue to exist for ever.

If existence could be made into non-existence, the whole world would vanish, it would not exist. There would be no law, no reality. It is one of the fundamental truths of nature that existence can never become non-existence, and that is one of the greatest proofs of our immortality. Because we exist today, therefore, by the law of nature we shall continue to exist. In what form? In the same form as we are now. We may not have the body, but body is only an outgrowth of the desires of the mental condition of the germ of life. We shall continue to exist as the germ of life, as an entity, as a conscious entity, and we shall carry our desires with us.

If we understand that desires are the causes which have produced our birth on this plane, and desires have kept us alive and we are by our thoughts and deeds, fulfilling some of our desires and some of our purposes of earthly existence, we have understood why we have come to this world and where we are going.

We have come to this world to fulfil a certain purpose, to gain certain experiences, and we are going to do the same until we have gained all experiences and fulfilled all desires. Now, if we are creatures of our own desires, we will notice one thing: that in the teachings of the Vedânta philosophy we do not blame the Creator, nor Satan, nor parents, for our earthly conditions; we do not blame anyone. There is the theory of one-birth which some of the religionists, like Christian theologists and others believe and according to which God creates our souls right at the time of birth; that we come into existence all of a sudden and then continue to exist for ever and go through all sufferings, pains, enjoyments. If this theory be true, then comes the question: who creates all these inequalities and diversities? Why should God make one happy and another unhappy? Why should one find all favourable conditions and another unfavourable conditions? What are the causes? If God makes them all so different, then He is responsible for all our sufferings and misery, then we blame God. Then those who believe that Satan interferes with God's creation and tempts us and makes us do all kinds of wrong deeds put up another object whom we blame in the end. Those who believe in heredity blame their parents—parents and grandparents—who are responsible, and who brought us into this world, so they are the objects of blame. But all these are not true. We take the whole burden of blame upon ourselves, and we do not curse God, we do not blame Satan, nor do



we curse our parents. We are governed by the law of cause and sequence. This law is called, in this philosophy, the law of Karma. This law is very irresistible and inexorable. No one can avoid this law. It does not stop for orphans cries nor widow's tears. Whether we wail or cry, this law does not stop for us; no matter how we deny its existence, it continues to go on. So the law of sequence continues right on whether we believe in it or not. If we deny the law of gravitation, that denial would not make the law non-existent, we would still be attracted toward the centre of the earth. Every atom of our physical form will be attracted towards one another—otherwise we would not have the shape of the body. The body is in its proper shape, why? Because of the law of gravitation, and nothing else. Why do we exist on this plane? Why are we not thrown off into infinite space? Because of the law of gravitation. You may deny that there is any such thing as the law of gravitation. Still, you cannot step off, you will have to stay, and this would be the greatest proof of this law, which is invisible and which is irresistible. Human belief would not change it. The Christian Scientist may try to deny the law of gravitation. He would not succeed. There he would fail. His mind is not more powerful than this law of gravitation. Similarly the law of Karma—whether we know it or not, we are governed by it. If we put our finger into the fire we will be burned—that is the law. Every action must produce a re-action of similar nature—that

is the law. If the action is good, then the reaction will be good. All the results we get unexpectedly we call *accidents*. There is no such thing as an accident in this world. We call it an accident, but it is governed by some unknown law. There is no such thing as absolute chance, but some unknown law which is operating in nature and which human minds have not yet understood. That is the meaning of chance or accident. Now, if we find suddenly any misfortune coming to us, and we cannot trace the cause of it in this life, we must not think it is an accident, because if we say it is an accident we simply betray our own ignorance that we do not know the law. There is nothing which happens in this universe and is not governed by some kind of law, whether we know it or not. Now, all our present conditions are more or less the results of what we were before.

Now, in the law of causation, or the law of cause and sequence, if one person performs an act, the result of that act will not go to another person, but to the actor himself, and that thing we must understand. If the parents have committed some wrong, then the wrong of the parents will not be suffered by, or will not follow the children of those parents. There is a statement in the Old Testament that the sins of the fathers go to the third and fourth generations, but that is only a very crude way of expressing that there is similarity. But although we find that certain sins are transmitted amongst children, still if we go

deeper we find that those children—the souls of those children deserved such conditions, otherwise they would not have come to such conditions. Like attracts like, and therefore they have come under those conditions and they are the sufferers. Transmission is only the physical condition. The law governs just the same, and if we are suffering, if we are miserable, that misery or that suffering should be considered as the result—as the reaction of those actions which proceeded from ourselves in the past; and all the reactions that will come to us in the future will be the results of all the thoughts and deeds of our present. And if we understand this law very clearly, then there would be no difficulty in understanding the law of reincarnation or re-birth. There are various conditions which modify or which affect our manifestations. The law of rebirth is a very complex law; it is not a simple law, because there are so many laws which come together and act and react upon one another, and therefore we cannot understand properly—we cannot differentiate and distinguish how far heredity goes, and where the law of Karma begins. There is some truth in heredity, as far as the channel of manifestation is concerned. If water flows through a certain bed, say of a certain colour, red, or yellow, or black, it takes the colouring. The water takes its colouring from the bed and carries some minute particles with it. So the parents are nothing but the channels through which the reincarnating souls manifest on this plane. They take the symptoms

of the channels through which they manifest. Now, why will certain souls come to certain channels, and other souls go to other channels? What determines that? Now, this is the most mysterious problem. This problem has not been solved yet in the western world. No scientist, no philosopher has succeeded in solving this problem. No theory in Christendom has explained this point very clearly and satisfactorily. But here in the Vedânta philosophy, we find this explanation: that the law of Karma determines it. That is each one will go through the channel which it deserves, to which it is drawn by its natural tendency. And here we may apply the law that like attracts like. Certain souls which need certain experiences will go under certain conditions, and those conditions must be exactly the ones which would bring about certain experiences. Or, in other words, the souls which need a certain experience will find their proper environmental conditions, proper environments and parents; and all the conditions of life are nothing but environments, and the soul is the entity which brings with it the desires, tendencies and the other qualities, character, etc.

What will become of them, who have gained experience on this plane? They will go to higher planes. This is not the only plane of existence. There are other planes, they will go there. Then in the course of our gradual progress we may go upward, then temporarily we may go downward again. Downward in what way? Here we must understand clearly that all minds are in the way of

formation. When we rise on the crest of a wave we are about to go down for a little while. Then we go up again. Now, if we understand this law; that we are going up but in the form of a wave—and that going down will be the result of certain deeds, certain misunderstandings, the result of ignorance, the result of selfishness. We may not do things correctly, we may not understand things properly, and, therefore, we may commit some mistakes, then we go down; but we go down to rise up again. We do not go down to stay there, but by the force of our individual nature we will rise up again and go still higher. And in this way we march onward toward the ultimate goal of evolution, which is *perfection*. And when that perfection is reached, we are free from the law or process of evolution. And if we have certain desires of an earthly nature which can only be fulfilled and satisfied on this human plane, we ought not to blame anyone if the same desires bring us back again. Do you know how many times you came before? This is not the first time we have come. We do not remember them. Every time we come, we come anew, as if for the first time. This is the delusive aspect of the phenomenal nature—we forget. If we did not forget, it would have been, perhaps, the most miserable and undesirable state. But it is a blessing that we forget, and we begin with fresh energy, with fresh force, with fresh ideas, as if we have come for the first time into this world. But still there are persons who have glimpses of their past; intuitively they are conscious

of their past experiences. If we study the case of prodigies and the wonderful powers which they manifest suddenly from their childhood, from their youth, we wonder how they could do these things without gaining experience in their previous lives. Suppose a child, a girl of five years of age, begins to play the piano like a master. What would you think of her? She had no time to learn in this incarnation—perhaps her parents never played—that is a wonderful manifestation. Nothing is lost. What we have gained in this life will not be lost, but it will continue to exist with us always. We may not come down here immediately—we may have to wait for favourable conditions for a long time before we take our rebirth. Conditions are not always ready. In time they will come—and if we are not attracted to the present conditions we will have to wait until proper conditions arise. So those things should be considered, and therefore the problem of death or what happens after death is the most complex, the most difficult problem. It is not a simple problem. Some spiritualistic mediums after communicating with certain spirits may think: why do the departed souls exist in the spirit world, and are not reincarnated. Then the theory of reincarnation must be untrue. No, they may remain earth-bound and communicate with the mortals for hundreds of years, then they may reincarnate. How do you know they would not reincarnate? They do not say that. It is very interesting. I mixed with the spiritualists and lectured for them in their summer

camp, and when I was lecturing on reincarnation some of the mediums came and shook hands with me and said that their spirit guides taught them exactly the same thing which I said in my lectures about reincarnation, while other mediums came to me and said my theories were all wrong, and I accepted both statements as true because it depended upon the knowledge of their spirit guides. Their guides were not perfect. Some guides knew this law and explained it—others did not. Those who are born and brought up with the idea of one-birth theory, for instance, that God creates the souls at the time of birth and they will continue to exist for ever, will give that knowledge because it is the impression they carry after death, and that impression is communicated in a certain way, that is all. But we must remember that all those who depart after death are not of equal character, or of equal experience, or of equal knowledge. There is just as much variety after death as on this plane of existence. There are idiots and there are wise ones after death. In fact, we carry with us what we have gained in this life, nothing more, nothing less. This is a peculiar world. The laws are very rigid, there is no bargaining. If it were possible for an ignorant, selfish, weak man to become an angel right after death, this world would have been different; but it is not so. Just as far as we have advanced in our progress, there we remain after death. We cannot jump immediately after death and enter into heaven. You see these laws have not been under-

stood by those who are following certain doctrines and dogmas and certain beliefs, or some kind of tradition or some book authority. They have not understood the laws. But those seekers after truth who, disregarding all authority of books and personalities, made rational investigations, discovered these higher truths and gave them to the world—what they experienced, what they understood—without thinking whether their opinions or their ideas would be appreciated or not. They did not care for that. They did not give these truths for name or for fame, but just for love. In fact, they did not give their names even, and in these writings the truth came as if from impersonal sources. The Vedic truths came to the world like inspirations. Through whom these truths came nobody knows. Their names are sometimes given, sometimes not. When they lived we do not know; and some of these names are poetic names, not real names.

And, therefore, Yama says that all our works produce impressions, and those impressions are the causes of our desires, and those desires are the seeds of our future works.

Now, when we eat something new for the first time, or drink something for the first time, it creates an impression upon our subtle body, or etherial being, or mind substance, and that impression is stamped and that impression is the seed of future desire. We may want that same thing again in the future, may be after ten years, or after five years, or after five days. If the impression be of a painful nature



then we do not want it, we try to avoid it; and if that impression be of a pleasant nature then we seek it and long for it and try to enjoy it. And so the desires are produced by these impressions, and these desires are the causes of all our works, mental and physical.

Each one of us can find out the causes that have built up the character, that is, the individual character and individual nature. We have made ourselves what we are today by our thoughts and by our desires. The parents might have objected—the parents might have desired us to do certain things, our guardians, schools, colleges might have wanted us to do certain things, but we could not resist that irresistible force of our inward nature, or our tendency. And therefore it is said in the *Bhagavad Gitâ* that each individual is propelled by his inward nature, to do the things which he or she is doing. In spite of all the resisting influences we go on doing the same thing when our nature is stronger than the resisting powers. Churches may hold before our eyes moral ideas, but if our tendencies be wicked it would not help. It would be like crying in the wilderness. We would laugh at them; they would not appeal to us. And that is the reason, it is the inward tendency, and see how natural it is. We cannot graft a moral nature on to a wicked one and make it moral. That is not possible. We may give ideas, but we cannot give the brain. The brain will come through the gradual process of evolution. Evolution begins inside, just as the evolution of a tree begins inside

first, and not from the bark, so the inward, mental, subtle forms begin to evolve first, and that subtle form creates this gross material form. And if we understand our subtle form, our character and the causes which mould our character, then perhaps we can do things, or live in such a way as would enable us to be better in future and not worse than we are now.

So all the works, thoughts and deeds of one life produce as their resultant the future of that individual, and this will determine the condition or the stage of development, whether it is higher or lower. And if we go lower for the time being, we shall rise higher again in order to reach perfection, to reach the goal. Each individual will reach the same goal in the end sooner or later. In fact, each soul will become perfect in the end, because it is the law of nature. Evolution ends in perfection; otherwise there would be no necessity of having such evolution. Modern evolutionists do not understand this. Of course, some of them do, like John Fiske and others who understand that the purpose of evolution is perfection; but materialistic evolutionists do not understand the purpose. They think it is mechanical—going on just like a machine, without any purpose. We must not follow their ideas, because they have not gone far enough.

That knowledge that we have acquired will help us in moulding our nature in future. And the bodies we get are also determined by our knowledge, by

our thoughts, experiences and deeds. If we injure others we will suffer, we may be born as cripples, etc. Therefore, we must not injure anyone. If we cheat others, we will be cheated. No one can cheat another without cheating himself. That is the most wonderful law! We may think we are cheating others, but we are not, we are cheating ourselves. We may tell lies apparently to save something, but we have done more harm, we have lost a great deal because we are self-deluded. The law of compensation works in every minute detail. When we gain physically, we have lost perhaps spiritually, or mentally, or intellectually. So we must not remain shortsighted, but, on the contrary, we must look on all sides and all conditions and everything that governs our physical, mental, intellectual and spiritual lives.

After describing this law, the Ruler of Death goes on describing the immortal Self and its nature. He explains the most secret of all secrets. He says that each individual soul is immortal by birthright. It cannot die. And where does that soul exist. It exists in us. That which remains awake when we are fast asleep, that which makes us conscious of our own desires, that which directs all the sense powers, sense activities, to the goal, is our true self which is immortal. It is a part of the absolute and immortal Being who is the Lord of the universe. That which does not sleep when we are fast asleep—what is that? That is the source of our consciousness, intelligence. When all the sense organs are sleeping, when the sense

powers are latent, when the mind is not working, still there is something within us that is awake—wide awake—never sleeps—can never sleep. It is wide awake. The moment we know that, we have known the immortal Self, we have known our immortal nature. That is pure, free from all imperfection, free from all impurity, free from all worldliness. That is vast, divine! There is nothing higher than that; it is perfect. And that is never subject to destruction—that is the secret of all secrets. He who has known that has become perfect, has become divine.

“Upon that depends all phenomenal existence”—that is, upon that depends all the mental, intellectual and sense activities. All the mental functions depend upon that; all sense perceptions depend upon that. It forms like the background of our being. It forms like the canvas upon which each individual ego or self is painted by the Almighty hand. It is also the background of all phenomenal appearances, like the sun, moon, stars and everything. It is the source of life, the source of existence, source of intelligence, source of all powers. If we see any powers manifested by the lower animals: the strength of a lion, the cruelty of a tiger, the intelligence of an elephant, the submission and faithfulness of a dog, all these virtues depend upon that one thing. No one can go beyond it. Even when we try to go beyond it, that power must depend upon that. And that is the answer to that question which the young man asked: that it cannot be destroyed; so it continues to live even when the

body is dead and gone. People may not know it; people may doubt its existence, but the very fact that they doubt its existence shows that it is the background of their own self. Suppose a man says that he has no tongue; the very statement that he has no tongue presupposes his tongue, otherwise he could not have talked. So that by which we deny the existence of soul is our soul. It is a very subtle argument. You know the Oriental minds, especially the minds of the Hindus, are very keen, the most logical minds that exist in the world. In fact, they have given the finest logic in the world. Aristotelean logic is only a reflection of Hindu logic, and that has given birth to all Occidental logic and scientific or materialistic arguments. If you study the Hindu minds you will find how logical they are, how deep they can go. If you make a statement they will see the fallacy right away, and point out that fallacy. Here a man may deny the existence of soul, but there we say: that by which you deny the existence of your soul is the proof of your soul. How can that be? It sounds like a puzzle; but there is a deep truth behind it. That by which we know everything, and which cannot be known by anything is our true *being*, is immortal, is divine, is not subject to birth or death. Those who do not know this—have not realized this truth will continue to satisfy their desires, to gratify their ambitions and remain in the phenomenal world, come back, be born on this plane or go to some other plane, or in the spirit world, or in the realm of the senses, and meet their friends and

then be separated again from them after perhaps thousands of years. If we desire after death to remain with our relatives or ancestors, we may remain with them for an indefinite period, as long as our desire will continue. But that desire will lead to some other desire which may bring about separation again. Then we would not consider it as a separation, but as a pleasure. Just as on this plane, when a person is married for instance, and that person may think on the day of the wedding that it is the happiest day in his or her life; then after a few years he or she is ready to get a divorce and think once more to gain the happiest day in his or her life by getting another wedding day, and so on. So, that kind of desire may happen—who can tell, because we are never satisfied with phenomenal conditions. All conditions are imperfect. It is only the one condition that is perfect. Until we have reached that we can never remain satisfied. We may be with our parents and friends, but when we discover their limitations we will look for something higher, something greater. We will find greater friends then, and the old friends will appear as too small, not worthy of us. What shall we do then? In our lifetime on this plane we find that it is so—friends of our childhood, in our school life, where are they now? They were most intimate at that time. Perhaps those who are our friends today may not be friends after twenty years—who can tell! Such is the phenomenal world. We cannot depend upon anything. Fools only depend upon certain conditions, not knowing the law that

those conditions will never remain the same always. The wise men never depend upon anything, knowing that they are subject to change. There is only one thing that is not subject to change and that is God. If God does not exist the world would appear as nothing because it is constantly changing. Can we depend upon our own bodies, for instance? No, they are constantly changing. We are living just as in a whirlpool of minute particles of atoms and molecules which are whirling in the form of a vortex. That is what we call our body. Minute particles or atoms are constantly going out of our system, and new particles are coming in; and this constant influx and outflux is what we call body. Can we depend upon it? No, every morning the body is new. Even the brain-cells are not the same after seven years—how can we depend upon our bodies? Take our sense powers, we cannot depend on them. Our mental conditions are also changing constantly, and the wise man is one who sees these things *as they are in reality* and never deludes himself by making mistakes. So we cannot transcend this true *being*, this Truth, this immortal nature, this true Self; and if we have known that we have conquered death. If we have not known it, we will have to know it in future—sooner or later, and the knowledge of that immortal nature will bring *perfection* to the soul, bring the realization of the absolute Being whom the religionists worship as God.

## CHAPTER XV.

### ONENESS AMIDST THE MANIFOLD

In this chapter we shall discuss the subject *oneness* amidst the manifold. In the last chapter we saw that our true Self does not sleep. It keeps awake even when we are in deep sleep. Our true Self is behind mind, behind intellectual functions, emotions, sensations, perceptions and other faculties of our mental organism.

The true Self is the foundation of our existence. In fact, it is the source of consciousness, intelligence and life. Upon this true Self depend all our mental and physical activities. The physical and mental activities would not exist if there were no conscious entity the *Atman* as the foundation of them.

As it is in us, so it is in all living creatures—in angels, in the *Devas*, in gods, in bright spirits, and in every being as well. In every individual, whether angelic, spiritual, human, or animal, you will find, if you examine closely, that this source of consciousness, intelligence and existence is at the bottom of all physical and mental activities. None can transcend it, nor can one go beyond it. We cannot go beyond our Self.

By 'Self' we mean here true Self, the *Atman*. Everything else depends upon our true Self. Even



the very existence of God, or our conception of God, depends upon our true Self. "If I die, my God cannot exist" this was said by one of the Christian mystics of the middle ages. If I am dead, how can my God exist? Because the very conception of my God is my own conception, and it entirely depends upon my own being.

When you think of God as sitting in the heavens, if you analyse that conception of God you will find that if you are deprived of your conscious entity the *Atman*, you cannot have such a conception. Such a conception depends upon the existence of the conscious entity, which is your true Self. If we say: "There is a sun", who says that? We! Who are we? Those we are nothing but our conscious entities. We, who are conscious entities, know that there is the sun, that there are the stars, that there is the moon, and everything else.

In our unconscious state, that is, in that state when we are not conscious of external objects like the sun, moon and stars, we do not know their existence. In fact, they do not exist in relation to us. In our deep sleep, when we are unconscious of our surroundings, the external world does not exist in relation to us—to our conscious entities. We are away from this external world which depends upon our sense perceptions, and if we try to go beyond it, to transcend this self, or conscious entity, we fail. Everything must be determined by our true Self, and not ourselves be determined by everything.

Now, the question arises: How many true selves are there? Are there many true selves, or there is but one true Self? That is the most abstruse subject or point in metaphysics for discussion. Each one of us possesses a true Self. Here we must remember that when we speak of true Self, we do not mean the ego, or the sense of 'I,' but we mean then *Atman* or that eternal source of consciousness and intelligence which exists as the background of the ego or 'I'. Now, the question arises: how many true selves are there? There have been various thinkers and philosophers who have discussed this problem from various view points and have come to different conclusions. All the dualistic thinkers believe that there are many true selves, many souls or *selves*—each individual possesses a self which is independent of the others, or which is separate from others; so the true Self is many according to them.

There are *Sāṅkhya* philosophers who believe in the same way, that each individual *Purusha* or Self is separate from that of other beings. But here in Vedānta we find that it is not many, but it is the part of one universal true Self, or the Self or the Soul of the universe. That is the true Self. In every one of us there is a manifested portion of the Self of the universal source of consciousness.

Now, how can we arrive at that conclusion? If we can only analyse the nature of our true Self as beyond all attributes, as the only source of consciousness, intelligence, and existence, then we

find that every individual existence is similar, every individual consciousness is the same. That is, your consciousness and my consciousness are not different, but the object of consciousness varies. When we are all sitting here together, we are conscious of being here in this room. That consciousness is one. Similarly, when all the inhabitants of the earth think that they exist now, that consciousness of existence is one. Just as the state of living in its most abstract sense is one. Life-force is one, just as the electricity is one. Now, electricity may be in each street-car, and there may be thousands of cars running in the world, and each car is moved by electricity, or possesses the light. The ignorant person seeing the electric light in the car will perhaps say that it is only individual light, or that it is separate from the rest of electric lights in other cars, or from those in private houses. But electricity *as such* is one. There may be thousands and thousands of dynamos producing that current, and that current may be manipulated in so many various ways, but still there is oneness at the back of all.

Now the gas-lamps are burning. Here in this room there are four. Each one is separate, yet the gas is the same; it comes from a common source. If we remember these illustrations and apply them to our own being, then we find that, although each individual self is conscious or appears as distinct and separate from others, still the source of consciousness is one and not many,

and its nature is always the same. The state of consciousness in a man and the state of consciousness in a dog are not different. As consciousness it is one. A cat is conscious of its surroundings just in the same way as a human being is, but the range may be smaller in a cat. The range may be still smaller in a minute animalcule, but as a state of consciousness it is the same. It varies only in expression and not in its nature at all.

In this way, if we analyse our own state of consciousness and compare it with that of others, we find that it is the same, or of a similar nature. When the angelic beings or gods are conscious, they have the same consciousness, they have the same intelligence like ours.

Now, intelligence as intelligence is one, but its manifestations are many. The same conscious intelligent being or entity manifests in various forms. It manifests through human beings, through animals and through the minutest animalcules; through the angelic forms, through the forms of bright spirits, through the form of the personal God. A personal God is conscious. His consciousness is not different from ours, only His range of consciousness is cosmic, while our range of consciousness is very limited. That would be the difference, and, therefore, this following illustration is given here:

“As one fire coming into this world manifests itself through various forms, so the one, all-pervading Being, the universal conscious entity,

manifests itself through various forms, human, animal and angelic, yet It is beyond all forms.”<sup>1</sup>

Now, take the illustration of fire. Fire has no particular form. It is only the vibration or heat in a certain state; but when that fire burns a log—if the log be of any particular shape, square or round, then when the fire is burning that log will take its shape. But fire itself has no shape, neither square, nor circular, nor round. It has no particular form, but it takes the form of the substance where it manifests itself. There may be a triangular shape of fire. When a building is burning, it may have a different shape, very tall, or square, or oblong, or circular or any other shape. But all these forms of the combustible objects do not limit the shape of fire, or do not limit fire itself. Fire exists everywhere, only in an invisible form. And as these forms cannot limit that which we call fire, so the various forms of beings through which that one source of consciousness and intelligence is manifesting itself, cannot limit the source. The various forms cannot limit that one source of intelligence and consciousness. The one source of consciousness and intelligence cannot be limited by various forms. It is beyond all forms at the same time just as, for

१। अग्निर्वैद्यैको भुवनं प्रविष्टो

रूपं रूपं प्रतिरूपो बभूव ।

एकस्तथा सत्त्वैभूतान्तरात्मा

रूपं रूपं प्रतिरूपो बहिरथ ॥

—Katha-Upanishad, 2.2.9.

instance, electricity is manifesting in various forms of light, heat, motion, still these manifestations do not limit electricity or the electric-current which is in the universe, or which is in the atmosphere. The Ruler of Death therefore gives here another illustration:

“As one vibration of air appears in various forms by coming into the world, so the one eternal Being who is all-pervading, appears in various forms and manifests Itself in various ways.”<sup>2</sup>

Take the vibration of air as producing different notes of music, the difference is only in degree, but the air is the same. When you take the wind-pipe and blow it, the notes may vary, but the air is one and the same. Similarly, the source of consciousness is one and the same, although its manifestations are myriad. And as air exists outside of all the wind-instruments and cannot be limited by them, so the eternal source of consciousness cannot be limited by any of the manifestations, but it exists outside of them also.

Take another illustration of space. The space of this room is distinct from the space of the room behind, and there may be millions of rooms, each possessing a differentiated space within the walls, but at the same time the space exists outside of all rooms. It cannot be limited. There may be

२। वायुर्देहो भुवनं प्रविष्टो रूपं रूपं प्रतिरूपो बभूव ।

एकस्तथा सर्वभूतान्तरात्मा रूपं रूपं प्रतिरूपो नहिरव ॥

—Katha-Upanishad, 2.2.10.

millions of rooms, but still the space, the infinite space cannot be limited by all those rooms. So the infinite Spirit which *pervades* this universe may appear to be limited by the individual manifestations, but, in reality, it can never be limited. It is limitless.

By all these illustrations the Ruler of Death tries to impress upon the mind of Nachiketâ, the seeker after Truth, that, although the manifestations are many, the source is one and universal and infinite. So, each individual soul may appear as distinct and separate from other souls, yet they are all so many expressions or manifestations of the one universal Being, which is the source of all consciousness and intelligence.

Now, this cosmic intelligence or consciousness is never affected by the changes of the body, mind or intellect. It is never contaminated by the corruptions, or sufferings, imperfections, or pains and sorrows of the individuals. Now, this will help you to understand very clearly that our true Self is never contaminated by sins which the individuals may commit. The true Self is beyond all imperfections or contaminations, and this idea is beautifully given in the following verse:

“As the sun, who is the giver of all light, the giver of all sight, is not affected or contaminated by the defects of individual eyes, so the universal Self is not contaminated by the imperfections of the individual minds and bodies; and as the sun is above and beyond all contaminations, so is this true Self

(the *Atman*) beyond all imperfections and corruptions.”<sup>1</sup>

Now, the sun may be covered by a cloud, the cloud covers the sun, but does the cloud really cover the sun? No. We know that a piece of cloud may cover the whole earth, but that cloud would not be large enough to cover the sun. It is only our eyesight that is covered by the cloud; therefore we do not see the sun. The sun is there above the clouds and he shines as bright as ever.<sup>2</sup>

If you are on the top of a high mountain there you will see that people in the valley cannot see the sun. They are suffering from rain, chill and storm, but when you are above the clouds you are in continuous sun-shine. That will give you an idea that the sun cannot be covered by the clouds but it appears that the sun is covered by the clouds. He is beyond the reach of all clouds. Similarly, the self-effulgent sun of our true Self is beyond the reach of all clouds of sorrow, grief, suffering or misfortune. They may appear between the ego and the true Self, and this true Self may be hidden for the time being, may be invisible by the ego for the time being but it exists just the same. An atheist or agnostic who denies the existence of the true Self does so simply because his spiritual sight is shrouded by the cloud of ignorance, darkness of

१ । सूर्यो यथा सर्वलोकस्य वज्रं लिप्यते वायुवैर्वाहदोषैः ।

एकस्तथा सर्वभूतान्तरात्मा न लिप्यते लोकदुःखेन वाह्यः ॥

—Katha-Upanishad, 2.2.1.

2. Vide “*Alpo’pi megho’nekayojanâyata-mâdityaman-  
dalam \* \**” etc.—*Vedântasâra*.



ignorance and so he cannot see it. So, all our sorrows, sufferings and miseries do not affect our true Self. Now, if we remember this, we shall be able to overcome suffering and the worst kind of grief and sorrow that we may have. This is the only remedy, and he who has realized it can remain absolutely happy in the midst of the ocean of sorrows, sufferings, misfortunes and pains. All these sorrows and sufferings we consider as our own because we do not understand our true Self on account of our ignorance.

Ignorance is the cause of all suffering; it is the cause of all misfortune, of all sorrow. When a person loses anything, if he remembers that the true Self cannot lose anything, then sorrow is gone, then there is no grief. If we know that the soul is immortal, when a friend dies we have no reason to mourn over him, or to grieve for him. Of course, some people may think that it would not be human. When they say that, they mean that they wish to remain on the plane of sorrow and grief and imperfection and ignorance; but a wise man is one who has risen above all human imperfections.

When we identify our true Self with the physical condition, then we think by mistake that these physical conditions affect our true Self. The disease of the body, or pain in the body would then affect our individual selves because we have not been able to separate the true Self from the physical conditions; but, in reality, the true Self

is far above physical conditions. Physical conditions cannot produce any change in true Self (the *Atman*).

If you see a piece of rope in the dark, you will think that it is a snake. Then you will get frightened, and all that fear is due to that delusive impression that that piece of rope is a snake; but when light breaks upon your life, you find that all this fright and agony or suffering was due to ignorance, due to self-delusion. Similarly, all these sufferings of the body, grief, sorrow and agony are delusions of the soul. Such souls as are not conscious of the true Self suffer from grief, sorrow, misery and physical ailments.

The birth and death of the body do not affect the true Self. We may be born or we may die, but still our true Self remains immutable throughout. This is the Truth. The Ruler of Death seeks to impress this Truth upon the mind of Nachiketâ because the latter wants to know the way by which one can transcend the realm of death. And that realm is nowhere but already within us. If we understand this true Self, we understand the kingdom of Heaven which is within us, and in that Kingdom of Heaven no death can enter.

Ordinary mortals are afraid of death because they identify themselves with the body, which is subject to birth and death. They cannot separate themselves from the physical changes, and therefore they fear; but wise men who have realized their true Self are never afraid of death. They know

that the soul (*Atman*), the true Self, cannot be destroyed, cannot die, cannot be changed.

This true Self I have already described as part and parcel of the universal Being, of the Self of the universe, the absolute Lord of the universe. As the true Self in our individual bodies is the Lord, the highest of all organic functions, mental conditions and intellectual functions, so the true Self of the universe, the cosmic Self, is the Lord of the universe. We may compare the gross physical universe with our gross physical bodies, that is, the gross physical universe is the body of the cosmic Self. The sun, moon and stars, all these are in the body of the cosmic Self, and the cosmic Self rules and governs all these different organs and their functions, just as the true Self in us governs our physical and organic functions. We must not forget that we are the rulers of our own bodies. We are not slaves. The source of consciousness and intelligence is the Lord of the body, is the Lord of the mind and senses, sense organs, and of everything. Similarly, the Lord of the universe is the One Who rules and governs everything of the universe. He is One, the sole Ruler of the whole universe. Where does He live? Does He live outside of the universe? No. He interpenetrates every particle of atoms and molecules, He is everywhere. God is not above and beyond this universe, as taught in the Sunday schools for the Christian children, that He sits somewhere on a golden throne. No, the Lord of the universe is here, in every atom of our body, in every inch of this wall, in every inch

of this space and everywhere. We must feel Him. He is beyond our reach, but He pervades the whole universe, pervades our mind, body and everything yet He makes everything appear in different forms. He moulds everything, brings changes in everything all the time. He is the cause of all changes. He makes that one substance appear in so many forms. He takes the substance of ether, for instance, and shapes it. By the process of vibration and evolution and molecular attraction He shapes that one substance in the form of sun, moon, stars, the earth, the organic and inorganic substances of the universe. Everything has come from that one eternal source. Just as a potter may take a lump of clay and may produce the various vases and cups and saucers and other things from one substance, so the Lord of the universe produces all these from one substance. But that illustration of the potter will mislead the ordinary minds because the potter is outside of clay. But if you can put the potter inside the clay and make him work, then we will understand how the Lord works through the materials, living inside. He lives in the earth and makes her move; He lives in the atoms and makes the atoms attract other atoms, or repel some other atoms, that force comes from Him. Ordinary minds have a queer conception of God as a very prodigious being—a being of immense size. They may think how can that vast being enter into an atom? Therefore, the ancient seers of Truth in India declared: "He is smaller than the smallest; He is larger than the largest at the

same time".<sup>1</sup> He dwells in an atom, in a molecule, yet He pervades the solar system. That is the most wonderful thing; and it is not very wonderful if we understand it clearly.

Take the illustration of space: now the space can be in this room or in the universe, yet at the same time the space can be in an atom. What is an atom without space? Can an atom exist without space? No. The very form of that atom means that portion of space. Space is not limited by atoms, yet it dwells in an atom. What is this sun? The form of the sun may be thousands of times larger than the earth, but that very form means so much space nothing else. The same space which is in the atom is also in the solar system. When we find such illustration, why should we wonder that God can live in an atom and at the same time be the infinite Being? It is possible.

"He who sees this Being as pervading his own heart, his own soul, attains to ever-lasting joy, and such joy does not come to others who do not realize Him in their hearts."<sup>2</sup> Now we shall be able to understand clearly that the true Self, which is the background of our own being, of our own conscious existence, is a part of this infinite cosmic Spirit, or cosmic Self, and this true Self

१ । अथोरखीयान् महतो महीयान् आत्मास्य जन्तोर्निहितो गुहायाम् ।  
—Katha-Upanishad, 2.1.10.

२ । तमात्मस्थं देऽनुपश्यन्ति धीरास्तेषां शान्तिं शान्तिं नेतरेषाम् ।  
—Katha-Upanishad, 2.2.13.

is seated in every individual, so if every individual realizes the cosmic Self as seated in his heart, he attains to that serene blissful condition—everlasting happiness.

“That infinite Being is eternal in the midst of non-eternal phenomena”. Now you see what are the non-eternal phenomena? These are names and forms—the forms of the earth, the sun, the moon, the stars, etc. All forms are non-eternal. These can never be eternal. Everything that is an aggregate of matter, that is the result of a combination of matter is non-eternal, and everything that is the simplest, the finest is eternal. Atoms are more eternal than the earth, the sun, moon and stars. Why? Because they are finer, they are simpler. What is finer than atom? Space and force. Space and force are more eternal than the atoms. What is finer than space? Conscious intelligence, true Self, and therefore that is the simplest thing in the universe. You know God is the simplest thing in the universe, therefore He cannot perish; and the true Self being the simplest thing in the universe is immortal; it cannot perish. But all things that are complex must perish. The body is complex, mind and sense organs are complex, intellect is complex, they all perish, but the true Self, the *Atman* upon which our true consciousness depends is one with our conscious entity, is immortal, cannot die. Therefore, we understand that He, the self-conscious entity, the self-conscious cosmic Entity is eternal in the midst of non-eternal phenomena, is the one source of intelligence, all-

wise, intelligent Being that guides and rules this universe. Intelligence is always the ruler of all matter and material objects. Just as I have explained that the intelligent soul is the ruler of the material form of the body, and the producer of all organic functions, so the intelligent cosmic Being is the Ruler of everything in this universe. Therefore, He is called the Ruler and Governor, and Lord of the universe. These are all terms which mean the same thing. He governs everything because intelligence is always the governor.

Look at the tremendous power of electricity. It can kill hundreds of beings at a time, but one intelligent man, who holds the key guides and directs all these dynamos and this tremendous force. He can produce that force and he can stop it. So intelligence is always the ruler over material forces, or mechanical forces.

Then you may say, why cannot we rule over this tremendous material force which is manifested in Mount Vesuvius? Why? Because our intelligence is not large enough—not big enough to control that. That is all. It needs a bigger intelligence to control that. We do not understand the cause, we are in absolute darkness of what is happening underneath, below the crater. We do not know that. If we could know that, we could stop it. Knowledge is power, and therefore we cannot control that. But everything that we know in our limited way we may have control over it. Higher intelligence will control that, will control

everything, the cosmic intelligence will control the movements of the stars, the solar system, planets and everything that exists in this phenomenal universe. "Amidst all transient things He is everlasting. He is the source of consciousness of all conscious beings. Yet He is one in the midst of many. He fulfills the desires and prayers of all beings. Whosoever realizes Him as seated in his heart is worthy of Him. Verily to him comes the eternal peace and to none else". The wise ones who have realized Him have gained eternal peace. All the questions and doubts of their minds are answered and solved, and therefore they are possessed of eternal peace—they are never disturbed by anything. Infinite wisdom has manifested in them; so they know anything and everything.

These passages are very beautiful. They are just like inspirations which came to the seer of Truth, and the seer of Truth expressed these inspirations. This language (*Sanskrit*) is called the language of the gods (*devabhâsâ*), no human mind constructed such sentences. It was the spontaneous expression of the higher power that guides our souls.

This is what they call the Veda. The *Veda* means *knowledge* that comes by revelation. But what do we mean by 'revelation'? 'Revelation' means *that higher knowledge which comes spontaneously to the soul*. Think of this idea of unity in variety which these most ancient seers (*Rishis*) grasped thousands of years before the Christian era. How



old these are we do not know at all because they do not give the date, and therefore they call these eternal truths, coming from eternity to eternity. They never limit the truth by time, because truth is beyond time and space. The eternal Truth is beyond time and space, how can it be limited by time? Ordinary mortals try to find history, get a date. What is the foundation of date? Somebody lived at a certain time and did a certain thing. That would be the beginning of dates. Christ lived and died, or some other Buddha lived and died. Count how many years ago and that is the way we count. But the eternal Truth cannot be limited by that. Before these seers, Truth existed, and so they never limited the Truth by time or by dates.

Here a question arises in the mind of this young seeker after eternal Truth, and he asks: "They perceive that highest unspeakable joy; how can I understand it? Has it its own light, or does it reflect light." Now this one Truth or one cosmic Being is realized by the sages and by the seers who say: "*This is That*" (*Ayamâtma Brahman*)—this true Self in us is that, is that which governs the universe, and there they find that unity.

"*This is That.*" *This* means the immediate source of consciousness, and *That* means, what exists as the cosmic consciousness beyond our reach. Or, you may say: "*This* is subject and *That* is object"; but "*This is That*"—the subject and the object are one and the same. That is, the Reality of the subjective and the Reality of the objective are one

and the same. This is the one peculiarity you will find in the Vedânta philosophy, which you will find nowhere else, not even in Plato, or Hegel, or Kant or Schopenhauer—that *oneness* (*Ekatvam*) of the subjective and the objective reality—one-ness between the cosmic Self, or Ruler of the universe, and the true Self of the individual being. They are one and the same. It is *unity* in variety, and this Truth was first understood by the Vedic sages in ancient India.

So, "How can I understand that—how can I understand this most unspeakable joy which is acquired through the realization of this unity? Has this one *substance* or one Being its own light? Is it self-effulgent, or does it reflect light, or does it borrow light from something else? Is it intelligence by itself, or does it borrow intelligence from some other source"? Now, see the depth of that question. Indeed the seeker after Truth was a great metaphysician, and Vedânta gives us the solution of all problems, whether they are metaphysical, philosophical, scientific or spiritual. And the Ruler of Death answers that question thus in this verse:

"The sun does not shine there, neither the moon nor the stars, nor the lightnings—how can the earthly fire shine or illuminate!" All these lights we perceive in the universe cannot shine, cannot illumine that substance, or that being, who is the

१। न तत्र सूर्यो भाति न चन्द्र-तारकम् ।

नेमा विद्युतोभान्ति कुतोऽयमग्निः ॥

—Katha-Upanishad, 2.2.15.

Ruler and Lord of the universe, and Who is our true Self. But the sun, moon, stars, lightning and earthly fire are illumined by that self-effulgent light, which is the Light of the universe. All these lights of the physical world shine after being illuminated by the light of intelligence. The light of intelligence is the illuminator of all bright objects like the sun, moon and stars. That may seem very difficult to understand but think of it.

Now, if there were no conscious being to know this existence of sun—what would have become of the sun? Who could have known that there is the sun if everything of this universe be unintelligent just unintelligent material objects like chairs or tables—who would have known that there is the sun? Who would have enjoyed the existence of the sun? The sun cannot exist if the light of intelligence does not illumine the very light of the sun; and, therefore, the light of intelligence cannot borrow this light from anywhere else. But, on the contrary, everything else borrows its light from that cosmic Being, who is the source of all intelligence and consciousness. The true Self is like the illuminator of the mind, intellect, ego, sense powers. In fact, we cannot know our own existence if there be not the light of intelligence within us, and when we are conscious of ourselves, then we are conscious of everything else—the sun, the moon and stars. Therefore the light of the true Self is the illuminator of everything of the universe.

As a chair, which is a material insentient object, cannot illumine the self-conscious entity, or cannot make itself known to any unintelligent substance, just as a chair cannot make itself known to another chair or to the table, or the table cannot make itself known to the chair, similarly the sun cannot make itself known to the earth, or the earth cannot make itself known to the sun, it requires intelligence, and that intelligence is our true Self. Therefore, the very existence of the sun, moon and stars and of everything depends upon this cosmic intelligence; and this cosmic intelligence is not far from us. By knowing *it* we shall realize our immortal nature and dwell in the realm of ever-lasting bliss. And then and then only we realize that oneness, the unique *Brahman* which pervades and underlies all the manifold world.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### PHENOMENAL UNIVERSE AND THE BRAHMAN.

The sixteenth chapter begins with a beautiful illustration of the phenomenal universe. The illustration is of a tree, and the first verse reads thus:

उद्ध'मूलोऽवाक् शाख एषोऽधत्थः सनातनः ।

तदेव शुक्रं तद्महा तदेवाप्तमुच्यते ।

तस्मिं लोकाः श्रिताः सर्वे तदु नात्येति कश्चन ।

एतद्वै तत् ॥

—Katha-Upanishad, 2.3.1.

In the last chapter we saw that the ultimate Reality of the universe is one, all-pervading and beyond all phenomenal appearances. It is beyond the sun, moon, stars. It cannot be enlightened or illuminated by the light of the sun, nor by that of the moon, nor by that of the stars. That eternal One is the root of the phenomenal universe, and this phenomenal universe, nay, all the universe which we perceive with our sense powers may be compared to a tree—to a fig tree (*Ficus Indica*) which has its root upward and its branches downwards. But this fig tree of the phenomenal universe is everlasting or eternal.

Here you will notice that the conception which the ancient Vedic seers of Truth and philosophers of

ancient India had regarding the phenomenal universe is that this world is eternal; it has not come into existence out of nothing, nor is it going back to nothing, but it has come into existence from the infinite Reality, which is one, and it will go back to the infinite Reality.

Now the question may arise: How this tree of the phenomenal universe has come into existence? Has it come out of nothing; has it been created by a personal God, or what was the cause of it? Many of you, perhaps, know by this time that the whole system of Vedânta philosophy does not believe in the special creation of the universe as it is described in Genesis, but it believes in the evolution, in the cosmic evolution from that one eternal energy. In fact, the conception of creation which we get from modern science, from the philosophy of Herbert Spencer or Heckel was given centuries before Christ by the ancient Vedic seers, and this idea of evolution, is therefore an old idea. It existed in India long before Pythagoras, Democritus and other Greek philosophers.

Now, why is this universe compared to a tree? Because we can get a very clear idea of the evolution of the universe just as we find in the growth of a tree from its root, and, in fact, the greatest scientists of modern times have used that illustration of the tree of evolution, with its root in the one cosmic energy; but that illustration, as we see, is an old one, and the root of this phenomenal tree is the infinite Being, which is called *Brahman*. From that infinite substance everything has come

into existence. If we go backward in the process of evolution step by step, we shall find that all these objects of sense perceptions can be reduced to their simplest elements of matter, or atoms and molecules and forces. If we go a little further we shall find that these atoms and molecules are nothing but force-centres. In fact, these atoms and molecules are the manifestations of the eternal energy or infinite source of all forces and powers of the universe. Now, that eternal energy, which may be called the mother of the universe, was described by the Hindu philosophers under the name of *Prakriti*, or creative energy. In fact, that energy is not separable from this infinite substance, but it is one and inseparable. It is called the *Brahman*, and when we understand this relation between the eternal energy and the Substance of the universe, the *Brahman* which means the source of all existence, intelligence, consciousness, then we shall be able to know the real cause of all phenomena.

The Sanskrit word for a tree is '*Vriksha*'. *Vriksha* is a word which comes from the root *Vrishcha* and that means 'to cut'. That is, 'that which can be cut', 'cut asunder', is called *Vriksha*; and that word has been used here purposely to show that this phenomenal world, although in its essence it is eternal, still is transitory. As far as appearances go this phenomenal world is transitory, it is not permanent, it is constantly changing. The same form or the same object we do not see twice. Every second the things are changing in this world.

The sun which you saw this morning, you will never see again. The sun is subject to constant change. The face which you have seen in a mirror this morning has changed already. You will never see that face again. You will see another face like it, similar to it, but not the same. That is a remarkable fact. We say that we are growing older in age and we enjoy in that idea that we are growing older; but, in fact, we are losing so much—we are not the same as we were before. And that idea we must always keep in our mind that this tree of the phenomenal universe is subject to change as it is subject to growth.<sup>1</sup>

Evolution means *change*. If we are all subject to evolution, by that we mean that we cannot remain stationary, cannot remain the same always. So everything that is subject to evolution is subject to change. Everything that is subject to growth is also subject to change. And in this world we have various kinds of experiences and experiences like that of birth, then growth, decay,

१। Acharya Sankara says in the commentary:

“उद्धमूलः—उद्धं मूलं यत् तद्विष्णोः परमं पदमस्येति सोऽयम्  
अव्यक्तादिस्थावरान्तः संसारकृत्त उद्धमूलः। कृत्तयश्च ऋचनात्, विनश्वर  
त्वात्। अविच्छिन्न-जन्म-जरा-मरण-शोकाद्यनेकानर्थात्मकः प्रतिलक्षणमन्यथा-  
स्वभावो मायामरीच्युदकगन्धर्वनगरादिवत् दृष्टनष्टस्वरूपत्वादवसाने च  
कृत्तवद्भावात्मकः, कदलीस्तम्बवत् निःसारः अनेकशतपाषाणवद्विबिक्कल्या-  
न्यदः \* \* \* एष संसारकृत्तः अश्वत्थः—अश्वत्थवत् कामकर्मवातेरित-  
मित्यप्रचलितस्वभावः स्वर्गनरकतियेकप्रैतादिभिः शाखाभिरवाक्शाखाः  
(अवाङ्मात्रं शाखा यस्य सः)।”



death. All these things are constantly happening before our eyes. What do they mean? They mean that the germ of life is subject to change. The earth is subject to change. In fact, this earth was at one time gaseous like a mass of vapour or vaporous matter, and gradually it has become cooler and has become habitable, and vegetables have grown and animals of various species have come into existence.

Now, this earth contained all these germs, even in its gaseous state. In fact, the whole universe contains the germs and the space contains the germs of all life. Everything in this universe is living; and at the same time, although we cannot see the germs of life which are more permanent than the grosser forms, we must remember that these grosser forms are not the realities. The realities are those which are the finest—imperceptible. But that which is perceptible is subject to change. That which we can see with our eyes or hear with our ears, or smell, or touch, or taste is subject to change; but that which is imperceptible, cannot be seen, cannot be heard, or smelled, or tasted, or touched is more permanent, and if we put our thought upon the grossest objects we are sure to come to grief in the end. If we cling or become attached to these gross material forms we are sure to come to grief in the end, but if we become attached to the imperceptible, finest, invisible reality, we shall never come to grief. The wise ones are those who can withdraw their minds from the gross material objects and fix

them upon the finest, imperceptible, invisible reality of the universe. Or, in other words, those who can see the root of this tree and, instead of being attracted by the flowers and fruits and leaves and branches, those who can go to the root, to the source of this tree, are able to rise above all changes, are able to reach the plane of Immortality, are able to conquer death, and that is what the Ruler of Death (*Yama*) is trying to explain here: that those who can go to the root of this phenomenal universe will have immortal life. But those who are on the branches, on the leaves, are attracted by the beautiful flowers of this tree of the phenomenal universe will remain subject to birth and death. They cannot transcend the realm of death, they cannot enter into the abode of Immortality.

People whose minds are deluded by various worldly desires and ambition cannot see the root. They are satisfied with the flowers and leaves and branches which are perceptible by the senses, and which are extremely attractive, which keep us busy on this material plane; but only the seekers after the Absolute, only the wise ones can discover the root and enter into the realm of Immortality. The wise ones take the sword of right discrimination as given in Vedânta, and with that sword they cut off the trunk of this tree. They separate this tree from the root, and remain in absolute peace and everlasting happiness. When I say 'they cut off the root and destroy the tree', of course they cannot destroy the tree in its universal sense, but the

individual tree is cut off, i.e. if we remember that each individual tree is cut off, if we remember that each individual soul is the centre of a world wherein it dwells, then we shall be able to know that by cutting off the individual world, the whole realm of senses and perceptions and feelings is cut off. The seed of this tree is in that unmanifested, indescribable, eternal energy (*Avyakta*). There is the seed of the tree of this phenomenal world, there is the germ. Again and again that germ sprouts up and produces the phenomena. The first manifestation of that seed, or germ, is the First Born Lord of the universe who is ordinarily known as the Creator. He is produced first; He is the seedling of this tree; He produces, He gradually develops Himself into the tree.

The First Born Lord of the universe is the highest manifestation. Who is this First Born Lord of the universe? The cosmic ego. And this cosmic self first rises from the ashes of the absolute substance, and the eternal energy then begins to evolve and manifest itself in the form of phenomena. It is then differentiated between the subject and object, the ego and non-ego. And this First Born Lord of the universe, or the cosmic ego, is called in Vedānta '*Hiranyagarbha*,' that is, He who dwells in the golden egg. This universe is like the egg, and the Lord dwells in it in the form of a child. This is, of course a mythological description of the creation, but it shows that the First Born Lord is the germ in manifestation, or the seed when sprouted, and when it

has become seedling then the tree begins to grow, and all the individual souls that exist in the universe existed before in seed form in that ocean, or in that absolute substance. They converge and make up the trunk of the tree, and various branches come out from that trunk according to the desires and tendencies. The latent desire, or the desire which is latent in each soul is like the water which helps in the growth of that tree.

The Lord of the universe does not create anything to satisfy his own desires, but He starts this evolution, this cosmic evolution to satisfy, to fulfil the desires of all the individual souls that are latent in that absolute energy. Just as when we go to sleep our desires are latent—we do not think of anything—we do not have ambition—we do not have any duty, but all are latent. And again when we wake up all these latent desires and tendencies manifest themselves and begin to play. So, at the time before the beginning of evolution all these souls were latent, or were asleep in that undifferentiated state, and the desires remained latent, and the beginning of evolution means the waking up of this energy, the awakening of the universe.

Whatever exists in the microcosm exists also in the macrocosm and we can reverse it, whatever exists in the macrocosm exists also in the microcosm. If we go to sleep the whole universe does the same, and the interval between the waking and sleeping is called a cycle,—and that cycle is either day or night. When it is day we call it evolution; when

it is night we call it involution. So you see whole universe goes to sleep and wakes up again; but when we go to sleep we are not dead—everything exists. And they use this illustration of waking and sleeping to show that nothing is lost; but during the sleep state everything remains latent.

After the dissolution of the phenomenal universe everything will remain latent. Our bodies may be reduced to their elements, to atoms and molecules and forces of nature. Our souls, however, will remain perfect, that is, remain intact, will not be annihilated, or dissolved or destroyed, but will continue to exist and retain all the powers and desires and tendencies which they possess. Then again in the beginning of a new cycle they will wake up and the accumulated desires or the combined desires of all living creatures will help in the process of evolution of the cosmos.

If this earth had not become habitable we could not have fulfilled our desires on this plane, it would have been impossible, and so the process of nature, or the law of nature is that the external conditions and environments must first become favourable in order to draw the souls who are ready to manifest their desires and fulfil their purposes. Any planet which is not habitable now will become habitable in the course of time, and then all the souls which are waiting for such manifestations will begin to express their powers, will be born, as it were; but nothing is born out of nothing.

We are not born out of nothing, but we existed, and so long we waited. When the earth was in its

gaseous state we could not find favourable environments to come on the physical plane, or the material plane. Perhaps we had at that time gaseous bodies, or vapoury bodies. When the whole universe is covered with water then we have watery bodies like waves or like fog, or the form of a bubble. Even in that form the intelligence can be manifested.

The tree of this phenomenal world has many flowers, many leaves. Leaves are those acts or duties which we perform during our lifetime, and the flowers are like the pleasures, the sensations of pleasure or pain, or happiness, or pleasant feeling. These are flowers. And then there are the fruits. Fruits are the results of our works which we perform; and the various planets are like branches, and the heavens are like nests of birds. That is, souls who have wings can go high, can soar high on a spiritual plane and dwell in those nests which we call heavens.

There are seven heavens according to the Hindu conception and not one heaven. These seven heavens are the realms where different souls go according to their previous works, according to their merits and their grade. That is, one is higher than another, and the other is still higher, and so on.

Celestial pleasures and happiness vary—vary in form and degree in these different heavens or realms. If we simply think of one heaven, we cannot expect any growth or progress or evolution after going to heaven, and therefore the Hindu minds could never accept the conception of a single

heaven for all individuals. It was impossible and for that reason you will notice that different religionists, or the followers of different religions have different conceptions of heaven. The Jewish heaven is not the same as the Christian heaven, or the Mohammedan heaven is not the same as the Zoroastrian, or the Chinese heaven is not like that of the Hindus. So why should we believe there is only one heaven where we shall all go. If heaven exists at all it must be diversified; it must be of different kinds and different grades. And these heavens are like the nests in that tree of the phenomenal world where these winged souls go and reside with angels. The wings are of course metaphorical. Souls do not have real wings like the wings of birds, as we see in the pictures. They are all symbolic. They do not mean anything. In the first place, physiologically it is impossible for you to have hands when you have wings. Hands and wings do not exist together, because hands have developed from wings as we see in nature. So when the painter gives wings and hands such creatures do not exist at all. They are beyond our conception, beyond our imagination; but they are symbolic. Winged souls mean those who have performed virtuous deeds and who can take a flight on the higher planes of the spiritual realm. They possess the wings, and those who go downward in the infernal regions have lost their wings because they gravitate on account of their evil deeds, wicked deeds.

And this tree of the phenomenal universe is com-

pared to a fig tree. Now, the Sanskrit word for a fig tree is *Ashwathva*. It means, *that which does not last till tomorrow*.<sup>1</sup> That is a word which has been used to convey the idea that this tree of life, or this tree of the phenomenal world is transitory, is ephemeral, and it will pass away. Being subject to change, it will pass away; everything: leaves and fruits, and flowers, and branches and everything will pass away, or will be subject to change, will never remain the same; but the tree will come into existence periodically, that is, in every cycle.

When one cycle of evolution will end, everything will go back to its primordial condition. Then, before the beginning of a new cycle, the whole tree will come out in a new form, and this idea was given by the ancient thinkers and seers of Truth who realized Truth through revelation; or, in other words, to whom the Truth was revealed, and in the Vedic scriptures we read: "*Surya-chandramasau dhâtâ yathâ purvamakalpayat*"; i.e., "The Lord created the heavens, the sun, moon and stars after the type that existed in previous cycles."

That will give you an idea how similar things, similar sun, moon and stars come into existence, though not the same since the same moon is gone for ever. For instance, if this earth be destroyed by coming in contact with a comet, the matter and force will remain in the universe, the whole earth

१। अः—आगामिनि दिवसेऽपि नस्यात्, इति अश्वत्थः, तदाश्वः



will be turned into a gaseous state, or vaporous mass, but out of that vaporous mass another earth will be formed in the course of, perhaps, millions of years. It will not be the same earth, but a similar planet. Such are the suns, moons and stars of other planets which are coming into existence and going back to the causal state, and again reappearing with a new garb in a new form. So in that way, although it is constantly changing, the process is eternal and the types are eternal. For instance, the horse type, or human type—these types exist in the cosmic mind in the form of Logos or ideas, and those ideal types are eternal. This ideal type or idea has been designated by Mahâbhâsyakâra Patanjali as '*Sphota*'. The *Sphota* is eternal and all the ingredients of the evolution of the universe come out from the *Sphota*. The individual forms will disappear, will come and go, but the ideal type will remain for ever. No one has seen an ideal man, or an ideal horse, but people have seen a black horse, or a white horse. People have seen a black man or a white man, but the ideal man has not been seen by anyone. The ideal man is in the mind of God. The mould is there and that is eternal. So the mould of the sun, the type of the sun, the type of the earth, the type of all living creatures is eternal, although the individuals may change. And in that way we can say that this whole universe is eternal, yet transitory. It is eternal in the sense of its essential nature, while transitory as far as its appearances or forms go. Our bodies are transitory, but matter, the atoms

and molecules and force which make up our bodies are eternal. The type of the form is eternal, but this form may go to pieces any moment; but the type will remain always. And all these forces, all these powers that are manifested in the universe, that are constantly evolving—growing and going back to their original condition are nothing but manifestations or expressions of one continuous mass of energy, and that is the foundation of the phenomenal universe.

Now, where does that eternal energy, or the mass of energy which is the mother of all force, the mother of all material forms reside? It resides in that one infinite Absolute. Energy needs a substance to rest upon, and that substance is the Absolute, the absolute *Brahman*, the immortal Substance, or essence of the universe. When we have known that we have known everything, nothing is left unknown.

“That is called the pure existence, the Absolute.” Pure existence which is free from all imperfection, is self-effulgent. The undying light of intelligence is there. It is not dead matter or dark substance. Some people may fear that when the sun, moon and stars do not shine, that it must be dark. No, it is not dark. It is very bright, brighter than the light of the sun. Although it does not burn, it is self-effulgent. That light does not depend upon any external condition, or upon external light, but its nature is to illumine. The pure light of intelligence and consciousness proceeds from that source. That

is vast, incomprehensible, unlimited and infinite. Nothing can limit it. No matter how far we can stretch our minds we cannot find any limit to that infinite Being. It pervades the universe and is not confined to any particular place. That is the real goal of immortality. That root of this tree is immortal. It is not subject to any kind of change, it is not subject to evolution, but it is beyond evolution. It is not subject to change or growth. God never grows, although the individuals grow. God is beyond growth. If He is subject to growth, as some of the modern thinkers believe, He is imperfect, He is no longer perfect. Again, that God who is subject to growth would not be a perfect God. We would not worship him as a perfected being, because anything that is imperfect is subject to growth, and that which is perfect can never grow beyond it. Those who believe that perfection is a *continuous progress* do not understand the meaning of perfection. That idea which means continuous growth is imperfect at every step. When the growth reaches its climax and cannot go further, then perfection is reached, and that state is divine and God is that. "That is immortality". "Upon that Substance, or that immortal Being everything rests." That Substance is the foundation of the universe. The infinite space rests upon that Substance; the sun, moon and stars, the planets, the earth, all depend upon It as their foundation.

"Nothing can go beyond that Substance; nothing can transcend It, and that is the Truth, the Reality

of the universe". That is the truth of our being, the essence of our being, because that is all-pervading, and thus he answers the question of that young seeker after Truth who wanted to know the absolute Being who is beyond all changes, beyond death.

Here you will notice that these ideas which you get in the oldest writings of Vedânta, you will find in no other man-made books, or ordinary philosophies which are nothing but products of imperfect minds. These ideas are not given by any particular human mind, but they are given as revelations. Why do we call them revelations? Because when human minds transcend intellect and mental limitations, then certain truths are realized, and when those truths are described they are called *revelations*. But anything that is grasped intellectually by reasoning is not a revelation. That is the difference. These truths were not realized by reasoning, but they came intuitively, like a flash. The word *intuition* is used for them, but it is not a perfect expression, and we have no better expression than that. We may say that intuitively they reached that consciousness, but it is more than intuition. It may be called *superconscious realization*, and when superconscious realization comes everything that is revealed in that state becomes *revelation*. Everything that is known in that state is revelation and is beyond the reach of intellectual reasoning. These ordinary philosophers like Kant, Hegel, Schopenhauer and others attain to certain truths by reasoning through an intellectual process, and

therefore they are not perfect. Their conclusions are not perfect. But these conclusions which you find here in these oldest *Upanishads*, for instance will remain the same always, cannot be changed, because they are truths<sup>1</sup>.

The seers of the *Upanishad* did not reach those truths by following the rules of logic, or the rules of reasoning, but they realized first, and then, synthetically, applied the rules of logic to explain it and to make it understood by ordinary minds. That is the difference.

So, if we can make a picture of this phenomenal universe as a tree with its roots upward it becomes incomprehensible by ordinary minds, it is unknown and unknowable even by human intellect. So come downward and take one step first from that infinite substance to the first Born Lord of the universe, who is the seedling, and then come down through the process of evolution, from ether or ethereal substance to the gaseous, liquid, solid, and come down to the lowest plane of animals, vegetables, minerals, etc. These are like branches. Then take the flowers and leaves. The leaves are the good works or duties; the flowers are the enjoy-

1. The Truth of the *Upanishad* is an immediate revelation or a direct vision of the Vedic seers. This revelation of Truth is uncontradicted (*avâdhitam*) all the time; nothing can contradict it. It is not taken from anyone (*anâdhigata*), but is self-revealed (*svayam-prakâsa*) and self-illuminated (*svayam-jyoti*), and so it is always free from any kind of error (*bhrânti*) and change. It remains the same all the time, past, present and future (*trikâlavâdhitam*).

ments or pleasures of life; and fruits are the results of our works which we perform and make a picture, and then you will be able to understand how this phenomenal universe is related to the absolute Being. And at the same time you ought to remember that the absolute Being is not far away from your true Self, so your true Self forms a part of the same absolute Being. If you wish to find the root of the universe anywhere, you will find it in yourself. That is strange. That idea you do not find anywhere else. No other philosopher has given that idea; not even Kant, or Hegel or Plato. Herein is the unique place of Vedânta among the philosophies of the world, and therefore we should try to understand it very carefully. We should think upon it, meditate upon it and make every effort to realize it as our true Self. Find the source of the universe in our true Self, in the Absolute which is behind our egos, and when we have discovered it we have found the eternal and immortal part of our own Self. Then we shall be able to transcend death and enjoy everlasting life.

## CHAPTER XVII

### WORLD AS THE RESULT OF VIBRATIONS

We have seen in the last chapter the beautiful illustration of the fig tree which represents the phenomenal world. The root of that tree is upwards and the branches downwards. The root is in the absolute *Brahman*, the infinite Being, and the branches cover all the objects which we perceive with our senses like the sun, moon, stars and every animate and inanimate object.

Now, in order to understand the cause that produces this tree of the world, we must know first of all the power or force which causes this evolution of the tree, and for this reason the teacher here describes in the second verse :

यदिदं किञ्च जगत् सर्वं प्राण एजति निःसृतम् ।

‘All the animate and inanimate objects of this universe are nothing but the results of the vibration of *Prâna*’. This vibration of *Prâna* is at the root of this tree, is the cause of all phenomenal events which happen in this universe.

The word “*Prâna*” is the Sanskrit term which means ‘*the cosmic life principle*’. It is the universal life principle. It is that which makes us living beings—that which produces motion, or vibration. This whole world, if we examine carefully, we will find is the result of vibrations. If there were no

motion, no vibration, this world would not exist. Whatever we see, hear or perceive with our senses is the result of vibration, or some kind of motion; and all these motions, or vibrations, whether chemical, physical, or mechanical, motion of any kind, rotary, or any other kind of motion, are caused by *Prâna*.

Of course, ordinary minds do not realize the nature of this universal vibration. We do not stop for a moment to think how these phenomena have taken place. Modern science has proved that everything is but the product of some kind of motion or vibration. Atoms and molecules are constantly attracted towards one another and repelled, and this attraction and repulsion of atoms and molecules produced this phenomenal universe, and the cause of that motion, or attraction and repulsion is the *Prâna*.

*Prâna* is that power which causes motion, which causes the atoms to attract other atoms, which produces repulsion, gravitation, etc. Now, if this attraction or repulsion or gravitation ceases to exist, the whole world will be destroyed; and if the vibration be stronger than it is at present the whole world will be destroyed. The disaster that you have heard of and read about in the papers, regarding the earthquake in San Francisco,<sup>1</sup> which has created such great havoc,—what is the cause of it? It is nothing but motion or vibration. If the

1. This lecture was delivered in America on April 24th, 1906.



earth under our feet vibrates in an unusual way, all the foundations of these buildings will be shaken, everything will be destroyed. And when we think of this: that the same vibration, the same motion which is the cause of our life and of our existence, is also the cause of our destruction; when it is in a different degree, it will create destruction, havoc, but within a certain limit it will give life, vitality and make everything harmonious. When we use the term "harmonious", we mean also vibration under different conditions, harmony of forces, and these vibrations are nothing but a certain form of motion.

The same gravitation which keeps us alive, which attracts the molecules of the cells of our body, will kill a person who falls from the top of a roof or a tree. We know that we shall not be able to live without being subject to this law of gravitation, and the same law of gravitation creates havoc and destruction. If a building falls down that is caused by gravitation, and that will perhaps kill thousands of people.

Again what is fire? That is a certain state of vibration. When the vibration is low there is heat; when it is greater it burns and destroys everything.

What is electricity? Electricity is nothing but vibration. When the atoms and molecules vibrate in one particular direction then it produces electricity.

We do not think of this constant vibration, or cons-

tant motion. Did it ever occur to you that when you were born you were whirling round and round 25,000 miles in twenty-four hours. If you were at the equator you were whirling 25,000 miles a day from west to east, and we are whirling now, but we do not think of it. We think we are sitting still. We are not sitting still, we are daily moving 25,000 miles in the space, and then again the whole earth is moving round the sun at the rate of 18 miles per second. That means, 64,800 miles per hour and 1,555,200 miles per day. We do not think of this. Two persons are sitting on a train—apparently they are sitting still, but in relation to the external objects they are moving very fast. Similarly, we are sitting still apparently in this room, but in reality we are moving very fast.

And what is the cause of this motion? It is *Prâna*, the life-force. Again, do we stop there, after moving round the sun? No, the whole planetary system is moving around some other system at the rate of 150,000,000 miles per second. And such is the condition under which we are living. We can never have rest. If we have absolute rest, there will be destruction and death, there will be no life. Life means *some kind of motion*. Any living object which does not move, which does not vibrate, we call dead. And the whole process of evolution is nothing but a certain state of vibration or motion.

The external objects—the objects of senses, like colour, sound, smell, taste, touch—all these are

nothing but vibrations. What is colour? Colour is nothing but vibration of ether. If the vibration be 400 billions in a second, then we will see red colour. This is the lowest vibration, and the highest vibration is the violet colour; and so all colours that we see with our eyes are nothing but vibrations of ether.<sup>1</sup>

Then again, what is sound? 11000 vibrations in a second will produce sound, and so with everything. If you examine properly you will find that we are living in the ocean of ether which is constantly vibrating and moving in some form or other.

Then again, what are our internal conditions? They are the results of vibrations too. What is thought? What is intellect? What is sensation and perception? They are nothing but vibrations. Thought is the result of the greatest vibration of the finer particles of matter. Such are the cases of sensations and perceptions, they are all nothing but vibrations.

If we analyse our perceptions, we shall see that the rays of light which are constantly vibrating in a certain degree when coming in touch with the retina produce an inverted image, just as you will find in a camera. The eye-balls are like lenses, and the retina is like the plate where the inverted image is produced, and that image produces a certain kind of vibration in the optic nerves, and that vibra-

1. Cf. Author's *Our Relation to the Absolute* (1946), pp. 157-158.

tion is carried by those nerves into the brain-cells, and there it produces some other kind of vibration in the molecules of those cells in the brain, and when that vibration is interpreted or translated by the sentient intelligent soul, then it becomes a sensation.

In this way we will be able to understand how the whole world is made up of vibrations, both internal and external. We cannot go beyond this vibration. When our lungs are moving we breathe air from the atmosphere, and then that respiratory process keeps all other organs in motion, then we have digestion, circulation, nerve currents and all other mental functions which we possess. In this ocean of ether, every particle of which is constantly vibrating, we live.

In any havoc or disaster we think we have lost so much; but have we really lost anything? No, we cannot, we have not. Why? Because we cannot possess anything. Motion cannot possess motion, vibration cannot possess vibration. How can we possess anything? So long as we are living in the darkness of ignorance we have the thought of ownership, possession—that this belongs to me. Who are you? You are nothing but a mass of vibration—how can you possess anything? All these thoughts of ownership, possession, start from ignorance.

A wise man can never possess anything, and that was the reason why Christ had no home to lay his head in, and so every wise man is a child of nature.

he cannot possess or own anything, consequently he cannot lose anything. There is no such thing as a loss in this world of vibration. How can we lose? Even this body we cannot possess all the time. The food which we take is not ours. It produces a certain vibration, and that again produces other vibrations, etc. Action and reaction are constantly going on, and we make mistakes. We grieve over certain things, but a wise man does not grieve over anything. It may sound a very heartless thing to say, but it is not heartless. When you look at an event from the standpoint of the universe you stop for a moment and think whether you really have lost anything or not, and when you find that you cannot lose anything, that whatever is yours is yours for ever, and what does not belong to you, you can never possess, that will bring a most comfortable thought, and the most loving thought in our minds. It will make us feel divine.

God does not mourn over anything. Why should He? He knows that nothing is lost in this universe. Even if certain things are burned into ashes, do you really think those things are lost in this universe? We may not use them, but they have other uses. They may not be for our use, but they may be of some other use in the universe. They may produce other things. And in this way, if we reason, we shall find that there is no ground for grief or sorrow or for loss. The bodies may be destroyed, but the atoms and molecules of the bodies are not destroyed, the egos are not destroyed.

yed, the souls are not destroyed. Perhaps you will hear the birth rate during this year, or during next year will be increased because so many hundreds of people are destroyed by the earthquake at San Francisco.<sup>1</sup> They will be born again. Where do these new children come from? They are the old ones who lived in some other existence, or lived in animal forms.

And so a certain set of vibrations lead to another set of vibrations, and in this way the world is moving. And the first expression of this phenomenal universe, the first manifestation begins with the vibration of that one cosmic energy. The cosmic energy exists from the beginningless past, and will continue to exist for ever, and that is the root of all forms. The suns, moons and stars are coming into existence from that energy, and in the end they will all go back to the same eternal stock. This earth has come into existence from the mass of nebulous matter, gaseous, vapoury substance, ethereal, and in the end it will go back to that vapoury, ethereal substance. The disaster which has given such a shock to the world would be compared to nothing when this earth will come in touch with a comet or some other star or planet and then everything will suddenly disappear. So we must be prepared to face that. We should think of the worst thing that could happen, and the

1. This lecture was delivered at the time when there was an earthquake disaster in San Francisco in 1906. Hundreds of people lost their lives in that sudden havoc and disaster.

scientists and astronomers always think of the worst conditions, and so they do not take these little things into account.

The disasters that are taking place in Italy the eruptions of Mount Vesuvius and the results therefrom, what are they caused by? By that vibration and motion. So everything that exists in the universe, everything that happens in this universe, is caused by motion or vibration of some kind, and the cause of that motion and vibration is the *Prâna*. The same *Prâna*, when it manifests itself in the external world, appears as heat, light, motion, gravitation, electricity, wind and other forces, as chemical and mechanical forces. They are all governed by the laws of *Prâna*. And when the same *Prâna* manifests in the internal world it produces thought, desires, feelings, emotions, etc. We are all governed by the laws of *Prâna*, and this *Prâna* is the universal substance. The first manifestation from this energy was *Akâsha*, the space. You may call that 'ether', but it is not exactly ether, it is that which produces ether, that which is the cause of ether. Modern science does not know what is the cause of ether, but when we shall be able to go a little further beyond ether we shall be able to find a mass of energy, nothing but energy, and that energy is extended. Space means *extension*, and ether, of course, fills that extended space; and that which produces *extension* is the energy governed by the power of *Prâna*. There is one infinite mass of substance extended, and when it is worked upon by the force of *Prâna*

the atoms begin to vibrate, and when they vibrate they attract each other and produce molecules, and those molecules again attract other molecules, and thus the elements of nature are produced. They are all governed by laws. We may call them mechanical laws or mechanical methods, but they are all governed by higher intelligence. There is no such thing as absolutely unintelligent mechanical law or mechanical force. Even a machine which is produced by human ingenuity will not be able to move by itself. It requires an intelligent hand to guide it, to direct it, in order to get proper results.

This body is governed by that power of *Prâna*, and that *Prâna* is not the same thing as any of the ordinary mechanical forces or mechanical laws that we know of. It is not the same as unintelligent force of attraction, or molecular attraction, or gravitation, or electricity, or heat, or light; but it is a power which regulates, guides and directs all the mechanical forces and controls them. Now, what power is that by which we can control all mechanical forces? If we know the nature of that power, we shall understand what *Prâna* is. It is inseparable from intelligent entity. Intelligent entity cannot be dead; it must be living. God is a living Being and yet at the same time He is intelligent. *Intelligence and life go together, and wherever there is intelligence there must be life, and wherever there is life there is some manifestation of intelligence.* And as we know that there is no such thing as dead matter in this universe,



the whole world, as modern science has explained, is a living world. Atoms and molecules are living because they have motion. *Wherever there is motion of any kind there is the manifestation of life, and therefore the whole world is living, and if the world is living then there must be intelligence in the world, otherwise it cannot live,* because life would not be the same thing as molecular attraction which exists in inanimate objects. Take an example of a chair. In a chair, there is electricity, light, heat, chemical force and vibration, but still there is no life, there is no manifestation of life in it apparently—not in the same way as in animate objects. So we cannot say that there is that amount of intelligence in a chair as in a living protoplasm. For instance, protoplasm has life and the first activity you will notice in a protoplasm is its *expansion* and *contraction*. That is the first expression of life-force, just as our lungs do, and that you will find in a mass of protoplasm. That motion is caused by the *Prâna*, the life-force. It is a mysterious force of nature. No one has understood it. If science fails to explain it, still it exists. Science only helps us in understanding it in a certain way, in presenting it ~~in~~ a certain way, in a certain form so that our dull intellect can grasp, *but it does not create anything new, nor can it destroy anything that exists.* Science simply explains, and if science has failed to explain, it is not the fault of the substance that exists, but it is the fault of the intellect of the scientists who cannot grasp that substance yet. Their intellect is

defective, and when their intellect will be improved that mysterious substance will be revealed. So this *Prâna*, although it is not explained by science at present will be explained in times to come perhaps. But it is already explained in Vedânta as the ultimate mother of all force. Science has gone so far as to prove the correlation of forces—that all forces are but various manifestations of one force, and what that force is science does not explain definitely. Some of the scientists say that it is intelligent mechanical force. Others hold that it is intelligent force, and when that intelligent force is atomic, it will be something like *Prâna*, and that *Prâna* is the cause of all evolutionary processes. The cosmic evolution is caused by that force of *Prâna*. As a seed contains the power of growth, so the seed of the universe is in that ocean of ether as a germ, and that germ contains the life-force, or the power of growth and evolution in a latent state. Gradually it begins to manifest itself, and when it begins to manifest itself, the cosmic evolution begins. The cosmic evolution begins then, and that is the manifestation of the tree of the phenomenal world. Gradually again the branches come out, and those branches cover all the visible and perceptible objects of the universe. Then human beings come last, because the human being is the finest production in the process of evolution. It is not the greatest, but the most subtle and most complex, because the organism is very delicate and complex. The nervous system of a highly developed man is very complex. No

one has gone into the details of the brain-cells, how they work and how they are guided. In fact, no human mind can grasp the connections and the ramifications of the forces and powers that are working through the brain and nervous system.

And thus the Ruler of Death explains that: "Whatever exists in this phenomenal world is but the manifestation of the vibration of *Prâna*—

"यदिदं किञ्च ज्ञातुं सर्वं प्राण एजति निःसृतम्"। This is not the first expression of *Prâna* and the projection or creation. Here you will notice the wonderfully scientific idea which these ancient seers of Truth had as regards 'creation'. They never said: 'Let there be light and there was light'. All those ideas are mythical, but the scientific explanation you will find nowhere so old and so wonderfully correct, so rational at the same time, as you will find in the Vedas. For instance, this is a portion of the Veda I am reading to you, and again in the Rig Veda, which is the oldest of the scriptures of the world, we read it existed before the beginning of evolution, and that beautiful verse, many of you have heard again and again, gives the most poetic, and yet at the same time most scientific conception of the state before evolution:

"At that time, before the beginning of creation, there was neither existence nor non-existence." Relative existence and relative non-existence did not exist.

"There was neither space nor time."

"Darkness ruling over darkness. What existed

then? Neither the sun, moon nor stars. No light was there. There was neither death nor, therefore, immortality."

These are all relative terms. If you have death, you can have immortality, but if there were no death, how could there be immortality. Therefore these are all relative terms, one presupposes the existence of the other.

There was neither day nor night. All these came later. What existed then? There was one eternal Being who was breathing but breathless—'*ânita-vâtam*'. If you can understand what that breathless breathing is, then you will know what life is, because life does not mean breath, but that which produces breathing, that which causes the motion of the lungs, the motion of the diaphragm, the activity of the organs and that is life. It is the outward expression. From that one Substance all these mighty forces of nature came into manifestation. Force below, energy above the space was formed. So you see that description is the most poetic and it is the most beautiful description of creation before the time of evolution that the world has ever received. And the seers of Truth to whom that idea was revealed were extremely rational, and they would not accept anything simply upon hearsay, and there in those expressions they laid the foundation of true science, true philosophy and true religion. Nothing can change it, nothing can shake it. We may manufacture various kinds of religion and superstitious ideas, but still those we cannot change. We cannot destroy the Truth,

or the conception of Truth which these ancient seers had.

So from that one eternal Being we have all come into existence by the power of *Prâna*; and the external world, as also everything that is internal, everything that is subject—that forms a part of our consciousness, or of our conscious existence, has also come out from that one conscious Being. The external world forms only one-half of the universe. It is the objective world which we perceive with our senses. The other half is the subjective. That which forms a part of our mind, that which includes all sensations, perceptions, thoughts, ideas, emotions, percepts, concepts, will-power, intellect and other functions of our inner nature, is subjective, and that cannot be explained by the objects of perception, or external objects. We may say anything about the mechanical process of the external phenomena, but we cannot say that all the internal phenomena are caused by mechanical process, because at every step we find the hand of the intelligent Being. Who will digest the food? Who will extract from it the nervous energy? Who will transform it into will-power and intellect? That would require a living being, an intelligent substance. Mechanical process would not do. It must be guided by an intelligent hand, and that is the hand of our true Self which possesses *Prâna*, the life-force, which is living. And so both the external and the internal world have come into existence from that one Being, that one substance, by the power of *Prâna* and through

the process of evolution. If we understand this, if we remember this, then we understand the whole process of creation. The whole world is eternal in its substance, but non-eternal in its phenomenal nature or in its form. The form of the earth will be destroyed; the form of the sun, moon and stars will be destroyed; the form of the body will be destroyed; everything that has form will be destroyed, but that which is formless substance, mother force, energy, will remain from eternity to eternity. This is the law. When one form is destroyed another will come and take its place; just as when one city is destroyed another city will grow out of its ruins. And perhaps within five years you will see another San Francisco, larger, more prosperous than it was before. Such is the law of nature: one is destroyed, another comes and takes its place. If this earth is destroyed, another earth will be created right away, and all these living souls will disappear and inhabit there. This is the way we are living in this universe—coming again and again, fulfilling our desires and purposes and learning lessons and gaining experience in the world. But all this we are doing through that force of *Prâna*. We could not gain any experience if we were dead, if we had no life, if we had no thought, if we had no will, if we had no *Prâna*<sup>1</sup>.

1. This *Prâna* has been called as *Prâna-Brahman*. The text says: "एतद्विदुरमृतास्ते भवति" (2.3.2.) 'Etad' means "प्राणारूपं ब्रह्म" and Sankara says: "ये एतत् विदुः स्वात्म-प्रवृत्तिं साक्षिमृतमेकं ब्रह्म, अमृता अमरब्रह्मभावास्ते भवन्ति"।

And every object in this universe is obeying the laws of *Prâna*, nothing can disobey. Are we not obeying the laws of gravitation? Are we not obeying the laws of attraction and repulsion constantly? But perhaps unconsciously. So the earth is obeying the law of gravitation. The earth cannot disobey that law. Nothing can disobey the law of gravitation, and that idea has been given most beautifully in a poetic way:

“That eternal Being is a great terror; every animate and inanimate object obeys Him—obeys His law. All the objects, even the sun, moon and stars are obeying the command of that infinite Being—consciously or unconsciously—they cannot transcend it”.<sup>2</sup>

Try to transcend the law of gravitation, but you cannot exist. If the sun tries to transcend the law of gravitation, where will it be? It will no longer be the sun. If the earth rebels against the same law and says: “No, I am greater than the sun, the sun must move around me and I shall remain stationary”, the earth will not exist. So you see as a master who holds an iron rod in his hand and

२ । महद्भयं ब्रह्ममुद्यतं य एतद्विदुरमुत्तास्ते भवन्ति ॥

भयादवस्थाग्निस्तपति भयात् तपति सूर्यः ।

भयादिन्द्रश्च वायुरश्च सृष्ट्वृषावति पञ्चमः ॥

—Katha-Upanishad, 2. 3. 2-3.

Here ‘भयं’ or ‘fear’ means ‘dependence’—the sun, moon, stars, wind and even Indra, the Ruler of heaven depend upon *Prâna-Brahman*, all of them owe their existence from the one fountainhead, *Prâna-Brahman*.

commands everything, so the infinite Being is commanding and everything is bound to obey. He who understands this transcends death and becomes immortal. When we know that infinite Being under Whose command everything is doing its duty, performing its function; when we understand Him and His nature and the laws under which we are governed then we have known everything of the universe; we have understood our immortal nature; death cannot reach us. Death can only attack anything that has form, *and so long as we are thinking that we are one with the body, one with form, we are subject to death, we have fear of death.* But if we can once think of ourselves as formless—that we have no form—still we have existence, individual personality, but no form, then we have transcended death, we have become deathless. And that is the great difficulty that we find in our way: the attachment to the form, to the bodies, to external things, to objects of sense, sense perception, colour, taste, touch—that makes us slave to the form, and consequently the wings of our souls are clipped we cannot go into that flight, we cannot take flight and soar high above in the infinite space of the absolute Reality. We come down on the plane of the senses and become attached, and through that attachment we get fear of death; and then we have thought of gain and loss, but when we are formless, why we have no thought of gain or loss. We cannot lose anything, we cannot gain anything, because we are nothing but a mass of vibration. This body is



nothing but a mass of vibration, so why should we remain self-deluded. We must open our eyes and see things as they are in reality.

“From the terror of *Brahman*, of that infinite Being, the fire gets heat and light, the sun gets heat and light, the clouds shower rain, the wind blows and death runs from place to place”.<sup>1</sup> These are all obeying the laws of *Prâna*, or the laws of Nature. In fact those are nothing but the products of these forces which are governed by the laws of that eternal Being. What are these laws? They are nothing but the moulds in which the *Prâna* is operating in nature, and consequently nothing can transcend that infinite Being; and there comes the solid, rational foundation of true religions. When you want to get the idea of an infinite Being who is the Governor of all vibrations and all evolution, and whose laws no one can transcend, then comes the conception of the grandeur, the majesty, and the infinite Nature, and at that moment we begin to feel how small we are, and consequently we kneel and bow down before that Terror. That whom the sun obeys, the moon obeys, and no one can transcend must be infinitely larger, infinitely greater, infinitely more powerful than our individual ego; consequently when we are in distress, when we are in trouble, we pray to Him, we worship Him, we try to overcome our grief and sorrow by thinking about Him, and there is the root or beginning of religion. So you

3. Vide *Katha-Upanishad*, 2. 3. 3.

see true science, true philosophy and religion go together. This religion is the natural outcome of science and philosophy. It is not man-made religion; it is universal religion, eternal religion.

“That eternal infinite Being if we can know before the dissolution of the body, then we have reached the highest goal, then we have become immortal”.<sup>1</sup>

Now, the Ruler of Death is explaining the mystery of death—how one can become immortal by knowing that source—the root of the immortal universe—knowing that *Prâna* is governing everything—knowing that the whole world is but the product of vibration, and knowing that the source of the universe is the Terror. No one can transcend His laws, but everyone must obey Him. If we know this, realize it, then we have no death, death cannot attack us. Then we think of ourselves as formless, as part of the formless infinite Being, as part of the intelligent source which governs the universe.

We govern ourselves in a smaller way, we are the governor of our bodies. If we were not a part of the universal Governor, the Ruler of the universe, then we could not govern even on a small scale, and this is one of the proofs by which we can know that as we govern ourselves, as we are the governors of our bodies in a small way, so we are parts of the Governor of the universe. The same power is manifested in us. Therefore we

1. Cf. *Katha-Upanishad*, 2. 3. 4.

are children of God, parts of the infinite Being, and when we know that we have transcended death. The realm of death is below us, it cannot hold us, we are above and beyond death. And those who do not realize it are born again in the realm of creation.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### END OF WORLDLINESS MEANS THE BEGINNING OF REALIZATION

The Ruler of Death said: "If anyone can realize the absolute Being in this life, before dissolution of the body, he attains to Immortality, and those who cannot realize the Highest, the true Self, will be born again in the realm of creation."<sup>1</sup>

It is very necessary to realize the Highest, the true Self, the *Atman*, the Absolute, in this life, because if we do not try to realize it in this very life there may perhaps be very few opportunities in future. *The present is the best and nearest to us, and those who cannot make the best use of the present will remain under the bondage of the law of action and reaction, law of Karma, and will not be able to transcend the laws that bind us on this plane—the laws that have brought us here and will bring us again.*

The attainment of Immortality does not begin in

१। इह चेदयमकद्वयोद्वैतं प्राक्-शरीरस्य विविक्षतः ।

ततः सर्वेषु लोकेषु शरीरत्वाय कल्पते ॥

—Katha-Upanishad, 2. 3. 4.

In his commentary Sankar says: "तच्छेद जीवन्नेर चेत् यदि अयमकद्वैतः सन् जानाति इत्येतत् भयकारणं मया बोद्धुमशक्यम् — प्राक् पूर्वं शरीरस्य विविक्षोऽवकाशनात् पतनात् संसारबन्धनात् विमुक्त्यते ।

\* \* तस्माच्छरीरविविक्षनात् प्रागात्मावबोधाय यत्न आस्थेयः ॥"

the grave, *but it begins here, right in this life*, and those who have realized their immortal nature, the absolute true Self, have become immortal.

He gives the reason why it is necessary for everyone to realize the Highest in this life, because the realization in this life is different from what we can have after departing from this plane. He says "in this plane," (*'iha ched'*), that is, when we have human bodies on this plane we can realize the Highest, the Absolute and our true Self just as clearly as we can see our own face in a mirror. As we see our own face in a mirror distinctly and perfectly, so we can see our true Self, the Highest, the Absolute, on the mirror of our intellect distinctly—on the mirror of our heart clearly.

But those who realize the Highest in the realm of ancestors, after death, cannot see so distinctly, so clearly. They can see just as we see faces in dreams. In the realm of ancestors all the meetings and communions with our relatives and friends will be just as we meet our friends and see their faces in a dream. That vision in a dream is not so distinct, not so perfect, as the picture on a mirror, and that kind of vision will be revealed to those who enter into the realm of ancestors (*Pitriloka*).<sup>2</sup>

In the Angelic plane, *i.e.*, in the realm of those

२। यथादर्शे तथात्मनि, यथा स्वप्ने तथा, पितृलोके ।

यथाप्सु परीष दृष्टे, तथा गन्धर्बलोके,

उद्भावात्तपोरिव ब्रह्मलोके ॥

—Katha-Upanishad, 2. 3. 5.

celestial beings who enjoy heavenly pleasures of various kinds, the realization would be, perhaps, not so clear as in a dream even, but as we see our own shadows in the water. When we look at our faces in the water we see the reflection, but that is not so clear even as in our dream state, and that kind of vision will take place in those heavens where all the celestial pleasures one can enjoy. You know there are various grades of heavens in celestial regions, different realms, lower and higher. These are the lower realms in the heavens. The highest realm and highest plane of the heavens is the *Brahmaloka*, the realm of the First Born Lord of the universe. That is the highest. In that realm, however, very few can realize the Absolute, the true Self, and those who do realize, realize very distinctly, just as we see the reflection of the sun on the mirror—bright, effulgent. But very few can enter into that realm. Those who have performed good deeds and lived righteous lives, unselfish lives, who have sacrificed their self-interest on the altar of humanity, who have obtained perfection in this life, they can go there and enjoy that Divine vision which is the ideal. But next to that is the vision which can be obtained in this life, and it will be wise to attain perfection in this very life.<sup>3</sup>

3. Regarding it Sankara says in his commentary: “यस्मादि-  
 दैवात्मनो दर्शनम् आदर्शस्यस्यैव मुक्तस्य स्पष्टमुपपद्यते, न लोकान्तरेषु  
 नान्यलोकादप्यत्र । स च दुष्प्रापः । कथम् ? इत्युच्यते—यथा आदर्शे

The realm of ancestors and the other lower realms of the heavens are not so satisfactory; they will not reveal to us the highest ideal, the highest Truth. We may meet our relatives and friends after death, but meeting our friends and relatives would not amount to much, just as it did not on this plane. We meet our relatives and friends here, but we are not satisfied, we want something more. Our longing for realization is not satiated, is not gratified after meeting our friends and relatives. Similarly, after death, if we go to the realm of ancestors and our forefathers come and we meet them, there may be temporary satisfaction and happiness, but that will not last long. Our longing would be to go higher, and that longing will never stop until the highest goal is reached. *It is the innate tendency of the soul to reach the highest, to be perfect, to be one with the divine Being, one with the Supreme; and for that reason we can never remain satisfied with anything which we may experience on any of these intermediate planes. Just as a man may become a millionaire, yet his longing is to become a*

प्रतिबिम्बभूतम् आत्मानं पश्यति लोकः अत्यन्तविविक्तम्, तथा इह  
अत्मानि स्वबुद्धावादर्शवन्निर्मलीभूतायां विविक्तात्मनो दर्शनं भव-  
तीत्यर्थः । यथा स्वप्ने अविविक्तं जाग्रदासनोज्ञं, तथा पितृलोके  
अविविक्तमेव दर्शनम् आत्मनः कर्मफलपभोगासक्तत्वात् । \* \*  
ज्ञायात्पयोरिव अत्यन्तविविक्तं ब्रह्मलोक एवैकस्मिन् । स च  
दुष्प्रापः अत्यन्तविविक्तकर्मज्ञानसाध्यत्वात् । तस्मादात्मदर्शनाय इदं  
तः कर्तव्यं इत्यभिप्रायः ।”

multi-millionaire. There is no satisfaction of greed or ambition and no one has ever succeeded. *The more we get, the more we want, and there is no end of it.* If a conqueror conquers one nation, he wants to conquer the whole world. Read the lives of Alexander, Julius Caesar, Napoleon, and you will find their ambition killed them. The ambition of all the great politicians, statesmen and merchants killed them. Ambition will never be satisfied; it will never bring happiness to the soul. So the wise man does not chase the phantoms of hope, because he realizes that this is not the aim of life. The aim of life is different. The aim of the soul is not that, *but to know its immortal nature which will last throughout eternity.* This body will go to pieces. This body is nothing. We ordinarily think this body is the same as the soul, but that is a great mistake. The body is manufactured by the soul, and our true Self is the essence of the soul. Even mind is partly material,<sup>4</sup> and it is the vibration of finer matter. They all may go to pieces. The body may be destroyed, but the soul, the true Self, will continue to remain just as it is now. It does not change under any conditions, but very few can realize that true Self. Whosoever has realized the true Self has become immortal, has overcome all fear of death. *Fear of death proceeds from ignorance, from attachment to the body, attachment to pos-*

4. Mind or *Antahkarana* is the product of nescience and though it possesses intelligence and is shining, yet it is regarded as matter (*jada*).



*sessions, attachment to things which we do not possess in reality.* The more we are attached to those things, the greater fear we have when we think of losing them; and all fear proceeds from that. But a wise man is free from fear. He has no fear because he does not possess anything, not even his own body. He cannot have fear, because he knows that the material body is nothing but an eddy in the ocean of ether, and it is constantly vibrating. The atoms and molecules are rushing in from outside and rushing out from inside. We are in a continuous influx and outflux of material particles, and each particle is vibrating and rotating and attracting other particles; and in this eddy of atoms and molecules we are living. And this eddy is that which we call our body, our self; *but in reality our Self is different, is higher, is more eternal, is immortal and indestructible,* and when we realize that Truth in this body we attain that realization. It would be foolish on our part not to make the strongest attempt to accomplish that, and therefore the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Vedānta philosophy teach, for the good of humanity, that every individual soul must try to realize its immortal nature before the dissolution of the body, because if we do not do this we would lose the greatest and best opportunity that has presented itself to us. But, of course, ordinary mortals who are craving for material gain and prosperity will not listen to such instructions, such advice. They will follow their own course the bent of their own mind and tendency, and no one can stop

that. But there are very few here and those few who have gone through all this experience and have realized that this world is transitory, that the pleasures of this world are not worth having, they alone are ready for that highest realization. They do not crave for material things and prosperity, they let everything go and they sacrifice, they withdraw their minds from those things and rise on a higher plane and become God-like divine. *God is that which has not any attachment to material objects, and if we wish to become Godlike we should first of all overcome that attachment, that selfish attachment to the body and sense pleasures and possessions and realize that we are children of immortal Bliss, that we live in holy Eternity.* Nothing can destroy us. Fire cannot burn us; air cannot dry us; water cannot moisten us and swords cannot pierce us. *Whosoever has realized this has become perfect, has become Divine, even in this life.* This the Ruler of Death describes more elaborately here by showing that *the Soul or the true Self, the Atman is above and beyond all mental and physical conditions.*

He who realizes his true Self as distinct and separate from sense perceptions, from sensations, from mental conditions, from intellectual functions, and who understands that separateness, that these mental conditions, intellectual functions and sensations and sense perceptions are separate from our true Self, that they do not make up our Self, or the *Atman*, or our true Being, but they

proceed from that common source as powers, as manifestations of latent powers, but he is the soul itself, the true Self, is above and beyond any sense perception or particular mental function, is free from grief and sorrow and he never grieves.<sup>5</sup>

The Upanishad says: "Mind is superior to senses, intellect is superior to mind, the sumtotal of *Mahattattva* or *Hiranyagarbha* is superior to intellect, *Avyakta* (*Isvara*) is superior to *Mahattattva*. Again the transcendent *Purusa* is superior to *Avyakta*. Knowing Him, realizing the *Purusa* men cut asunder the knots of *samsâra* and attain Immortality (*moksa*)".<sup>6</sup>

If we separate our immortal Self from sense perceptions, from mental functions, nothing can affect our true Self. If we identify ourselves with that which is beyond all mental

५ । इन्द्रियाणां पृथग् भावमुदयास्तमयौ च यत् ।

पृथगुत्पद्यमानानां मत्वा धीरो न शोचति ॥

—Katha-Upanishad, 2. 3. 6.

Why the wise and realized souls do not grieve or mourn for anything, Sankara clarifies its cause by saying:

“आत्मनो नित्यकृत्वभावत्वाज्यमिचाराच्छोकादिकारवत्त्वानुपपत्तेः । तथा च अतुल्यन्तरं—‘सरति शोकमात्मवित् इति’ ” ।

६ । इन्द्रियेभ्यः परं मनो मनसः सत्त्वमुत्तमम् ।

सत्त्वाच्च महानात्मा महातोऽज्यकमुत्तमम् ॥

अज्यकाच्च परः पुरुषो ज्ञापकोऽस्ति एव च ।

तं ज्ञात्वा मुच्यते अनुरक्तवत्तमं गच्छति ॥

—Katha-Upanishad, 2. 3. 8.

and physical changes, then everything that happens to the body, or to our senses, or to our mind, cannot reach the Soul, cannot affect the Soul, and consequently all grief, sorrow, suffering, and even enjoyment are either on the sense plane or on the mental plane; and, therefore, the wise man is never affected by those changes of the body, senses and mind.

In this way we shall have to analyse our whole being; then we shall be able to get at the Absolute, the eternal Part, the immortal Essence, which is hidden under the cover of all sensations, mental functions and intellectual functions. First we see that this body is a mass of sense activity, and these sensations exist in sense organs, and these sense organs produce certain vibrations, and the vibrations affect our mind, our intellect and understanding. But if we have no understanding, no knowledge, no power of discrimination, then we do not understand, do not know the difference between one emotion and another. That part which can distinguish the feeling of pain from the feeling of pleasure, the feeling of love from the feeling of anger, and all other various mental functions is *intellect (buddhi)*. That intellect is just like a mirror which catches the reflection of all the different functions of the sense organs and sensations and perceptions, ideas, emotions and other things that occur within us, within our mind. So mind, which includes all emotions, volition, etc., is not the same as our intellect or understanding. *Intellect* is that by which we

discriminate and compare one thing with another. That is *cognition*, and that power of cognition may be called *intellect*.<sup>7</sup>

Now, that intellect again is a part of the cosmic intellect or the understanding of the cosmic ego, the First Born Lord of the universe. Cosmic ego is greater than our individual intellect, greater than our individual understanding, because it includes all the individual egos and intellects. It is the one complete Whole, and we are but so many small parts, minute parts of that infinite Whole. It is called *Hiranyagarbha* (*Brahmâ*, the *saguna Isvara*). It is the same as *Mahân-Atman*. 'Mahân' means 'great', and 'Atman' means 'that being' 'that exists'. *Mahat* is another manifestation of *Avyakta*, the unmanifested primordial energy. Here two words cannot coalesce, but they are kept separate. Even beyond the cosmic ego we shall have to go if we wish to realize the absolute *Brahman*, for God<sup>8</sup> is not the highest, He is rather

7. Cf. Author's discussion on *Consciousness* in the Chapt. II of his *Our Relation to the Absolute* (1946), pp. 19-37.
8. In fact, God bears the same status as that of cosmic ego (*Brahmâ* and *Isvara*). But here it may be asked what is the difference between *Brahmâ* and *Isvara*? According to Advaita or non-dualistic Vedânta, *Isvara* is the unmanifested or *avyakta sakala* and *saguna* (qualified) *Brahman* whereas *Brahmâ* is the manifested or *vyakta sakala saguna Brahman*. The transcendental *Brahman* is *nirguna* and *niskala* and it is absolutely different from the *saguna Brahman* in stage or status, but in essence it is non-different from both the aspects of the *saguna Brahman*.

lower in status than the Absolute, the source and the substratum.

Beyond the cosmic ego is undifferentiated energy which produces intellect, which is the mother of intellect, understanding, mind, mental functions, as also of material and physical forces of nature. That is One.<sup>9</sup> There is no manifestation other than that One.

The first manifestation in the process of evolution is the cosmic ego. That is the highest manifestation. That cosmic ego divides itself and subdivides itself and produces innumerable reflections or images. Each of these images is called a 'human soul' (*vyasthi jivâtman*), but the cosmic ego as a whole (*samasthi jivâtman*) is the first manifestation, and before that manifestation took place there was this undifferentiated energy (*avyakta Isvara*). The universe did not exist then in its present form, but it existed in a germ state,

9. The Swâmi intends to say that the cosmic ego, *Brahmâ* or manifested and differentiated *Brahman* is inferior in status to unmanifested and undifferentiated energy which is known as *Isvara*, the *Avyakta*. In Vedânta the cosmic ego, *Brahmâ* has been compared to a dream (*svapna*) and *Isvara* as deep sleep (*susupti*), whereas the *Virât-Brahman* or the gigantic cosmos is the awakening state (*jâgrat*).
10. It should be borne in mind that though both *Brahmâ*, the manifested *Brahman* and *Isvara*, the unmanifested *Brahman* are known as 'cosmic ego', yet the undifferentiated energy *Isvara* or *Avyakta* has been designated both as 'cosmic ego' and the first and highest manifestation of evolution' (*prathama Purusa*) by Vedânta.

in a seed form ('*viĵākārena*'). All the forces and powers of nature were potential in that state (unmanifested), as the energy remains potential in coal, but when we burn it, it becomes actual. Now, coal may produce tremendous energy, may make a fast train run so many miles in an hour. Where did that energy come from? From that coal. Of course, coal contained that energy in a potential form, but it became actual when it burned. Then the heat was produced, and from heat steam was produced by coming in touch with water. So indirectly that potential energy has been the cause. If there had been no heat, there would have been no steam, and if there were no coal there could not have been heat. So nothing has come from outside. All the energy that has been manifested in the form of force existed already in the coal, and that was the potential state.

Similarly, when the universe goes back into that primordial energy it remains potential. The tremendous energy that is radiating all the time from the sun was latent in that mass of energy before the beginning of evolution. So nothing has come into existence suddenly. Everything was there, everything is there, and nothing is wasted.

Many of the scientists think that the sun's energy is wasted in the infinite space. It is not wasted, but it is stored up again in another form. There is neither gain nor loss in this universe, everything is

complete. But when we look at the individual points, we may say that particular manifestation has gained or lost just as coal has lost its energy when it is burned; but that energy is in the universe in another form. When we look at that energy from the standpoint of the universe we find nothing is lost; but when we look at it from the standpoint of the particular substance then we think it is lost, but in reality there is neither gain nor loss in this universe. Take the energy that has been lost in the disaster at San Francisco; every individual thinks he has suffered a great deal of loss, but in reality he has not lost anything. That is the point where we should come eventually, and philosophy will teach us that. The more we advance in realizing the vastness and the grandeur of the universe and the eternal Truth, the less we shall worry about trifle things like gain or loss. If all human beings are destroyed, even then nothing is lost. When we shall understand that, then we have understood the eternal Truth, the unchangeable Reality. We are coming to that understanding. Science is pushing us to that end, and nature teaches us by giving hard blows by snatching away the nearest and dearest things that we cling to and become attached to. Nature tells us that it is not your thing. That thing belongs to nature and it is not yours. Do not be foolish, do not be like a baby. Wake up, and do not claim those things which do not belong to you. And that knowledge each individual soul will have to learn before it can reach perfection.



"Beyond that mass of undifferentiated energy is the Absolute, is *Brahman*, is our true Self".<sup>11</sup> Now, that is not the same as energy. Modern science has gone so far as the unknowable energy. Beyond that energy science does not know anything.<sup>12</sup> Even that energy is a matter of supposition. Of course, it cannot be proved, except by inference. But beyond that energy is the Highest, and science will never reach it, because it is beyond the domain of science. Science can only infer from sense perceptions. The realm of perceptions is the realm of science, and that which is beyond the state of energy would be the realm of metaphysics or philosophy, and not of science. Consequently science will never reveal it. But science will help in understanding the true nature of it; it will classify the events, and make better theories, better hypothesis, and those hypothesis and theories will help us in understanding that which is beyond the unmanifested, undifferentiated energy.

"That energy is called by various names." Think of the time when this was taught! Centuries before Christ this has been handed down from time immemorial. Some people think these books were

११। "अव्यक्तात् परः पुरुषो" ।

—Katha-Upanishad, 2.3.8.

12. But eminent scientists like Max Plank and others assure us that in future science will be able to unlock the highest mystery, which is the subject-matter of philosophy, and in this way science and philosophy will meet together one day.

written perhaps 700 or 800 years before Christ. But these books existed, through memory, for ages, centuries before that time; and so this knowledge also existed. See how scientific the demonstrations and conclusions were. In the last chapter I explained how this whole world was described and explained as the result of vibration. Show me any other scripture or oldest writings where you will find such explanations which are absolutely scientific and absolutely philosophical. The Jews began to conceive of a little philosophy after eight centuries A. D., when atheism and agnosticism began to prevail; but before that time they had mythology. The stories of creation as you all find in the Old Testament existed in all countries—similar stories of creation, but they are not philosophical, and those who tried to explain them through science have failed again and again. But compare those stories with this description, which will help you to understand Herbert Spencer's philosophy in a different way, and, in fact, the minds of those greatest thinkers of ancient times were more purified than those who are living on the sense plane today and philosophically speculating with lots of instruments, machines, and using other brains. But these were great seers of Truth. They did not have any instruments. They realized this, felt it, and their perception was so perfect that whatever they felt was truth. And here today Herbert Spencer leads to what? To dry agnosticism, to materialism, and perhaps to atheism; and the conclusions of these great seers lead to the most

beautiful conception of one universal Being, Who is the goal of all religions. Their conclusion satisfies the highest aspirations of human souls, uplifts the souls, and makes the souls rise above all mundane affairs and enter into the abode of infinite Being and immortal Bliss. Such is the difference. "By knowing that which is beyond the undifferentiated energy, the mortal, the living soul attains to immortality".<sup>13</sup> Now, we shall have to go beyond the cosmic ego, beyond our intellect, beyond the undifferentiated energy (*Avyakta*), and starting from there we will have to enter into the realm of the Infinite, the Absolute and then we shall find the immortal Being. Everything else is subject to change, is subject to death. Death means *change*. We are dying every minute—every moment. After seven years every atom and molecule of our system is renewed, you are not the same being again. Your baby-body is dead and gone; your child-body is gone, and those who have reached beyond forty, the body of their youth is dead and gone also. So why should we remain attached to these physical conditions? We must know this; open our eyes, and begin to feel that which is unchangeable in the midst of changes.

"But this absolute Being cannot be perceived by sense powers; the eye cannot reveal It." You have heard that the infinite Being cannot be seen face

१३। अज्यक्तात् परः पुरुषो व्यापकोऽस्मिन् एव च ।

तं ज्ञात्वा मुच्यते अनुरक्तत्वञ्च गच्छति ॥

—Katha-Upanishad, 2.3.8.

to face by the sense of eye. It is said in the Bible and in all the scriptures of the world. The reason you will find in Vedānta, because the senses cannot reach there, even the mind cannot reach there, the senses are too gross,—not because God was so majestic, His glory so dazzling. From the mythological story we know that God was seen, His back was seen by Moses, and not His face. If Moses could see His back, why not His face? Those stories do not appeal to a rational mind. But when you say the senses are too gross, too material, that will appeal to sensible persons. His back could be seen, but not His face—those were all allegorical and, not philosophical statements.

“His form cannot be perceived by the senses”.<sup>14</sup> No one can see the absolute Being through eyes—through the powers of sight or of hearing. The eye here stands for all sense powers.

“He can be realized only by the purified mind, by the purified heart”.<sup>15</sup> When the heart and mind, the

१४। न संदृष्टे तिष्ठते रूपमस्य

न चक्षुषा पश्यति करिष्यदेवम् ।

—Katha-Upanishad, 2. 3. 9.

१५। हृदा मनीषा मनमभिहितो

य एनं विदुस्तदास्ते भवन्ति ।

—Katha-Upanishad, 2. 3. 9.

By the word ‘*manasā*’ Sankara means ‘*mananarupena*’—

“मननरूपेण सम्प्रत्यक्षेण । अभिहितोऽमितमर्थितोऽभिप्रायित इत्ये तद” ।

Anandagiri says: “अधिकल्पयित्येति । विषयकल्पनादुच्यते

inner nature (*ântara prakriti*), are purified, they are purified from all the imperfections of selfishness: earthly desires, sense powers, etc., and that purified heart or purified mind can lead the intellect further up, can make the intellect grasp a glimpse of the Absolute—not the whole of It, but still a glimpse, and when that glimpse is had, the whole intellect is transformed and simultaneously the ego is transformed.<sup>16</sup> That is the transfiguration of Christ.

Christ means *ego beyond mind and which is transfigured into the Divine*. That transfiguration will take place in every individual. The ego is transfigured into the Divine by *sâdhanâ* or spiritual practice. No more desires for earthly things and attachment to the body remain and that would be the sign of of transfiguration. If the body goes to pieces, the soul does not claim one particular form as its own. It gives it up because it withdraws itself from the material connections. When the soul is transfigured into divine Being, the glory of the Infinite, the eternal Spirit shines upon the soul, and the majesty, the grandeur, the omniscience begin to dawn upon the horizon of the individual ego, and with the glimpse of that beautiful glory and

ब्रह्मास्मीत्यविषयतयैव ब्रह्मभावव्यभिक्त्या महावाकोत्थया बुद्धिदृष्ट्याशक्तु  
शक्यत इति सम्बन्धः” ।

16. The transformation of intellect or ego means the revealing of the Divine consciousness (*suddha-jñâna*). Sri Râmakrishna said that *suddha-mana* and *suddha-jñâna* are one and the same in reality.

grandeur and omniscience the individual ego enters into the realm of Immortality and never returns. He has transcended all laws then, nothing can hold him back. That is the goal—the ultimate goal of human life. Then he explains how that goal can be attained. If the sense powers cannot reveal it, if purified mind and heart can reach the Absolute, what shall we do then?

Then Yama the Ruler of Death describes first that state in which the Absolute will be realized: “When all the sense powers are silenced; when the mind is still; when the thoughts do not disturb the peace—in that state the glory of the infinite Being is realized and the omniscience dawns upon the horizon”.<sup>17</sup> That state is called *Samâdhi*. All the sense perceptions will be quiet, there will be no disturbance. All the intellectual functions will be stilled, yet it is not the same state as death, because they will all remain latent. As, after a tremendous storm of rain and thunder there prevails calmness, so after incessant *sâdhanâ* that calmness will prevail within us and then the bright sunshine of realization will come. We are now under the storm—the storm of passions and rain of desires

१७ । यदा पञ्चावतिष्ठन्त ज्ञानानि मनसा मह ।

बुद्धिभ्य न विचेष्टते तामाहुः परमां गतिम् ॥

—Katha-Upanishad, 2. 3. 10.

By ‘*pancha-jñânâni*’ Sankara means: “ज्ञानार्थत्वात् श्रोत्रादीनि इन्द्रियाणि ज्ञानानुपलभ्यन्ते । \* \* तेन संकल्पादिभ्यामृतं नान्तःकरणेन । बुद्धिरपि अन्धबलायलक्षणा न विचेष्टते स्वभावापारेषु न चेष्टते न व्याप्रियते” ।

and ambitions and hurly-burly of this busy rush of earthly life, competition for bread and butter. All this we are going through. *Do not expect to reach perfection in this state of rush. First quiet your minds and still your senses and enter into the abode of peace. Then begin to look upward. There you will see the silver fringe of the bright cloud, and that will burst and the self-effulgent Sun (Atman) will be revealed.*

Then he describes how that state can be attained: "That state can be attained through the practice of Yoga".<sup>18</sup> Yoga means the method of getting concentration, or it can be said that Yoga is concentration. By concentration, i.e., by withdrawing our mind from external objects, by gaining self-control, by controlling our mental conditions and passions, by holding our senses in a peaceful state, if we remain well-balanced, then we attain to perfection. Many people who try to practise Yoga get unbalanced. Why? Because they have not the strength and will-power to bring these mad elephants of senses and passions under control. It requires tremendous force and strength to bring these wild elephants, intoxicated with the desire and passion of worldliness, under control, and ordinary mortals who have no guide, who have no strength cannot accomplish it; and, therefore, he says: "Remain well balanced. Keep mind, intellect, senses, all in perfect harmony, and keep

them under control. Then that high state will come".<sup>19</sup> By this it does not mean that the man who has lost all powers like a plant, all passions and sense powers will reach the highest. No, by this it means that all sense powers will remain in perfect condition, and transmute those forces on the higher plane and keep them under the power of your will. Then the attainment to the highest and the peace eternal will come in *Samâdhi* and that is the goal of human life.

In the state of Yoga there is the beginning of the realization and the end of worldliness. That is, where worldliness ends, the highest realization begins. And if we remember this, practise Yoga and self-control diligently, and remember that the highest ideal is beyond mind, beyond intellect, the realm of immortality is beyond undifferentiated energy, and slowly but steadfastly march onward, and stop not until the goal is reached, we attain to perfection and Blessedness.



## CHAPTER XIX.

### REALIZATION OF THE ABSOLUTE

In the last chapter we noticed what the Ruler of Death said to Nachiketâ, the young seeker after Truth regarding the means by which the absolute Being can be realized and Immortality be attained, and that means is the practice of Yoga. And we also noticed that through the practice of Yoga the realization of the true Self can be also acquired.

The practice of Yoga leads to that consciousness of the Supreme, that Godconsciousness, which cannot be acquired by any other method. By this Yoga, of course, we do not mean any particular kind of Yoga, but, like a generic term, it includes all the different methods that are described in the Vedânta philosophy.

Why is it necessary to practice Yoga? Can we not see the Absolute with our eyes?—such questions come up in our minds very often. These questions also arose in the mind of Nachiketâ, and so the Ruler of Death said: “Neither by speech, by words, nor by mind can this realization be acquired, nor by the power of sight;”<sup>1</sup> because the Absolute is not only beyond

the reach of our physical body, but also of our senses, sense powers, the powers by which we see, hear, smell, taste and touch. These powers cannot reveal the transcendental absolute Reality. By these powers we can grasp only *appearances* of things. We can never perceive the Reality with our senses, but only the *appearances* of the Reality. We see the Absolute *as it appears* to us. Senses are too gross, the vibration of senses are too thick, and so they cannot reach the super-sensible Absolute. The words cannot describe it because our words are too imperfect. Even that which we think or can imagine we cannot express in words; we cannot express even our feelings in words. Take, for instance, *love*; we cannot express what love is in words. It is impossible to express in words hatred or any feeling like kindness perfectly. But we can feel much more than we can say. Many times when we are absolutely silent, we have the deepest feelings, our heart's inner nature is filled with emotions, but when we try to express them in words we fail, and that shows that if our ordinary feelings on the human plane, if the human affection, and emotions cannot be expressed perfectly by words, how can we clarify the Absolute and the supreme Being by words? Words cannot reach the Absolute, the Highest. And so whenever we try to express the nature of true Self we fail, and that is the reason why we have so many contradictory statements like : "He is this" and "He is not this" "He is knowable" and "He is unknowable." If we say

knowable, that means a certain class of things, and by that term we bring the absolute Being within that class. But He cannot be confined within any class, because any kind of classification makes Him imperfect. Again when we say that He is unknowable, we make Him transcend the realm of the knowable; and in this way, whenever we try to describe the Absolute, we contradict ourselves. We cannot help it, *because where all contradictions end there is the realm of the Absolute. All contradictions are on the relative plane, just as much as all assertions. So assertion and negation must end in the Absolute.* Or, in other words, our positive assertions, positive statements and negative statements will coincide, will harmonize, will become *neutralized* in the Absolute, just as positive and negative poles of a magnet are neutrals at the neutral point where it is neither positive nor negative. So the absolute Being is the neutral point in this phenomenal world, where the positive and negative sides harmonize and become neutrals and equals, and there is the realm of the Absolute.<sup>2</sup> Whenever we try to reach that how can we have any positive idea, or negative idea? So words fail.

Even thoughts cannot reach that transcendental plane. The Absolute is beyond all thoughts. We may think perhaps that by purifying our thoughts we will be able to make our thoughts reach the Absolute; but we may try in vain for ages, still

2. Cf. Author's (a) *Self-knowledge* (1944), pp. 17-18; (b) *Our Relation to the Absolute* (1946), pp. 42-43.

the Absolute will not be brought within the realm of thoughts. It cannot be. All thoughts will end, and one thought will be overcome by another until our thoughts become infinite in range, and infinite in minuteness, in subtlety. Thoughts cannot reach it, mental feelings, mental perceptions, mental qualities, and all other mental modifications cannot apprehend the Highest.

But if this be the condition, then how are you going to apprehend the Absolute? How are you going to realize our true Self?

“Regarding that absolute Truth, one can only say that He is, or It is.”<sup>3</sup> We may know or we can say that It exists, the Absolute exists; beyond that we cannot say anything. But those who deny Its existence can never know It. Those who have this feeling that the Absolute exists can make attempts to know It, and can gain the realization in the end. But those who deny entirely, ignore Its existence will never make any attempt, and will never be able to reach It until that mental condition is changed or transfigured.

The Absolute is beyond all thoughts, beyond all subtle substances, and the finest things that we can grasp or comprehend. The Absolute is the cause of all, yet It is causeless, It has no cause, and at the same time it cannot be confined within the laws of causation. Or it can be said the

३ । अस्तीति नु क्तोऽप्यत्र कथं तदुपलब्धते ।

—Katha-Upanishad, 2. 3. 12.

Sankara says: “कस्माज्ज्ञतो मूलमात्मा अस्तीत्येवोपलब्धव्यः ।”

causeless cause. It does not begin to be the cause, otherwise there would be a change in Him, but It is beyond the realm of cause and effect, yet no other thing exists in the universe which may be called the cause of the universe. All things proceed from the absolute substance of Being and those who have their minds fixed upon It as existing Substance, as existent, that It exists, that He is, can realize It, can understand Him and acquire perfect consciousness about Him.

“Those who hold such ideas, that the *Brahman*, the Absolute is existence, It is not a negation, not nothingness, but existence, it is the absolute Existence, can attain to It.”<sup>4</sup> Now, there are some people who believe that this whole universe has come out of nothingness, in the beginning there was nothing, and from nothing the whole thing has come into existence. There is a class of Buddhistic philosophers who believe in that. They are nihilists (*Sunyavâdi*). And all nihilistic thinkers can be classified under that head. Nihilists believe that this whole phenomenal world has come into existence out of nothing, but those who hold such thoughts will not be able to realize the Absolute, because the Absolute is the Existence. It is not nothingness (*Sunyatâ*) as the Buddhists maintain, but It is *something*, It is *suchness* or *thatness*. There are four different classes

४ । अस्तीत्येवोपलब्धस्तत्त्वभावेन बोधयोः ।

अस्तीत्येवोपलब्धस्य तत्त्वभावः प्रतीयति ॥

—Katha-Upanishad, 2. 3. 13.

of Buddhistic philosophers.<sup>5</sup> One class believes in this idea that the whole universe has come into existence out of nothing, and in order to refute such ideas this was said that those who hold the thought that the *Brahman*, the Absolute, exists, will realize *It as existent something, as existent*

5. In fact, there are two main *yānas* (vehicles=doctrinal paths) of the Buddhists, *Hinayāna* and *Mahāyāna*. The proper name of the *Mahāyāna* is *Bodhisattva-jana*. The *Hinayāna* claims generally priority to the *Mahāyāna*. The Buddhist philosopher Asanga described graphically the distinction between *Hinayāna* and *Mahāyāna* in the first book of his *Mahāyānā-sutrā-lankāra*.

In 2nd-3rd century A.D. we find among the Buddhists three kinds of *yānas*, *Srāvakayāna*, *Pratyekayāna* and *Mahāyāna*. From these three *yānas* evolved four schools of philosophy: (1) *Sarvāstivāda* or *Sautrāntika*, (2) *Vāhyārthabhaṅga* or *Vaibhāsika*, (3) *Vijñānavāda* or *Yogācāra* and (4) *Shunyavāda* (*Mādhyamika*). The Bengali Buddhist author Advayavajra (12th century A.D.) explained clearly these four schools in his celebrated book *Tattvaratnāvali*. The *Vaibhāsika* school has explained in their books the two *yānas*, *Pratyeka* and *Srāvaka*. The *Mahāyāna* is again of two kinds *Pāramitayāna* and *Mantrayāna*. Among these two classes the first has been explained either by the theories of *Sautrāntika*, *Yogācāra* or *Mahāyāna*, and the second *Mantrayāna* by the theories of *Yogācāra* and *Mādhyamika*.

Again among the two *Pāramitās*, *Mantranaya* or *Mantrayāna* commences with the theories of *Shunyavāda* and *Vijñānavāda*. There was also a great controversy between these two *Vādas* (doctrines) or schools. The *Shunyavāda* deals with the doctrine of '*Shunyatā*' and Advayavajra said in his *Mahāsukhaprakāsa* that from the right or correct knowledge of *Shunyatā* appears *Vija* (seed), from *Vija* develops the idea of *Vimbam* and by the process of *nyāsa* and *vinyāsa* in *Vimbam* realization of everything comes. That is, a man can

*Being*, and to them the Absolute reveals Its true nature, and not to those who deny Its existence. So, in order to attain to the realization, first of all we must have the consciousness that It exists. Now, how can we gain that consciousness? Simply through our own existence. We ourselves cannot deny our own existence, because we exist, we are, I am, you are, he is. We cannot deny this. Now we are sitting here, can we deny that? No, because we exist here. So we cannot deny our existence. If we deny our existence then we do not exist, consequently we can never know our existence. But if we believe in our existence, if we are conscious of our own existence, then that would be the foundation—that would be the starting point for our consciousness of the absolute existence. If I exist, if the chair exists, if the earth exists, if the sun exists, if the moon exists, if all the objects of phenomena exist, then that existence is universal, it is not nothingness. If we have come out of

achieve knowledge of everything by the correct knowledge of *Shunyatâ*. Therefore, *Shunyatâ* does not imply the conception of *naught* or *nothingness*, i.e. it implies something that *exists*. But Nâgârjuna expounded the doctrine of *Shunyavâda* in a quite different way—in a nihilistic system. His *Mâdhyamika* philosophy propagates the doctrine of *momentariness* and *nothingness* or void. Sankara, the non-dualistic philosopher refuted this doctrine of *Shunyavâda* in his commentaries on the *Upanishads* and *Brahmasutra*. He said that the realization or knowledge of *nothingness* pre-supposes an existence of another knowledge and that means we posit an *existence* of knowledge when we deny something by a knowledge. The nihilistic philosophy is therefore untenable being illogical.

nothing we would remain nothing all the time and then our end would be nothingness. And that which is in the beginning and in the end is also in the middle state. So if we were nothing in the beginning and if we are going to be nothing in the end, then our present state is also nothing, because nothing can never produce something. So whatever we do, with such a belief we are doing nothing. We may eat, or drink, or sleep or do our functions, that is nothing; they have come out of nothing and are going back to nothing, so all these works and duties are useless and absolute waste of time and energy. But if these things which we are performing at the present moment exist, then they existed before, or they have come out from the existence, and they will continue to remain in some form or other, and will be called existent. Otherwise everything will be reduced to nothingness. So that would be the starting point, if we try to understand our own existence *per se* as it is in reality, then we shall be able to understand the absolute existence.

But where lies our existence? Is it in the body? No. When we sleep we are not conscious of the body, but still we exist. When we dream we are not conscious of the body, still we exist. Now that existence is not on account of the body; that existence is reflected through the body. In fact, our own existence, the existence of the soul makes the body appear as existing, otherwise it would not exist. Ordinary materialistic thinkers say that the soul exists because of the body, that the soul is pro-



duced by the body; but they put the cart before the horse, and consequently they can never come to a satisfactory conclusion. The body does not produce consciousness of existence, but the consciousness of existence makes the body live and move, and that would be the right thinking. So by *right thinking* we will be able to understand that the existence of our soul is the cause of all other existence. In fact, how do we know that the sun exists? Because we exist. If we are non-existent the sun can never exist for us. How do you know God exists? Because we exist. If we do not exist, God would never exist, and that is the most logical proof that if other things exist then their existence depends upon our own existence. And so we are the starting point, and starting from that knowledge we shall eventually come to the knowledge of the absolute Existence (*Sat*) which is *Brahman*.

Now, when the sense powers are not active, and the body is not active, sense organs are not active; when the emotional nature is inactive, when all emotions cease, when all passions and desires do not disturb our mind, when our intellectual functions are in abeyance, when our mental faculties do not work—even at that moment we continue to exist as an entity. In the state of *Samâdhi*, when everything vanishes away, all external colours and beautiful landscape and paintings and everything that attracts our eyesight vanish; when the beautiful notes of music and all noise cease to produce an impression upon our conscious-

ness, when the sense of touch is latent, when mind does not work, when thoughts are still, when absolute darkness prevails in this phenomenal universe, then the light of the self-effulgent sun of our true Self is visible, is perceptible by our innermost nature, the innermost ego. Then comes the realization of the absolute Existence. That Existence can never change. It is independent of all external conditions and environments and therefore whether you have body, or conditions favourable or unfavourable that does not make any difference. You continue to exist; even though the whole world goes against you, still nothing can hurt you, or injure you, or can make you non-existent. And that state is described here:

“When all the desires and passions of our hearts are removed; when perfect silence and stillness prevail, then the mortal becomes immortal”.<sup>6</sup> The mortal enters into the realm of Immortality at that time. That is the Yoga; that is the highest state of Yoga. In that state Godconsciousness comes. Then if we wish to be immortal we must do this, we must enter into that supramundane realm first by silencing—by removing all these disturbing elements, quieting them, and making our mind and mental functions remain in absolute silence. It is very difficult to do that, but that can be done. He who has succeeded in doing it, has found the

६। यदा सर्वे प्रमुच्यन्ते कामा येऽस्य हृदि बिम्बाः ।

अथ मर्त्येऽमृतो भवत्यत्र ब्रह्म समश्नुते ॥

—Katha-Upanishad, 2. 3. 14.

direct proof of immortality—direct proof of the Absolute. No other proof can be more convincing than that because the Absolute, as I have already said, is beyond the reach of our senses, sense powers, speech, mind and thought. How can we give any proof or evidence of the Absolute beyond this statement: that It is, It exists. Why, because we exist. That is the only proof. If you wish to know further proofs go beyond the realm of thoughts and there you will find the most satisfactory and convincing proof of the Absolute, and those who have attained to that ever-shining state have become wise ones, have become perfected. Then they are not of this plane; they are not like ordinary mortals, they are immortal.

“When all the knots of desires of our minds are shattered, or destroyed in this very life, we enter into the blissful realm of immortality, and this is the golden teachings of Vedānta”.<sup>1</sup> We have a great many knots of desires. Our mind, under present conditions, is all tangled up. We cannot separate one function from another. We are not

७। यदा सर्वे प्रमिथन्ते हृदयस्य ह पन्थयः।

अथ मर्तेषाञ्मृतो भवति एतावदनुशासनम् ॥

—Katha-Upanishad, 2. 3. 15.

Sankara says in his commentary of 2. 3. 14, that mortals become immortal even in this life if they purify their hearts by rubbing out all the dust of desires. He moreover said: “अत्र हृदय प्रदीपमिवावृतं सर्वबन्धनोपशमाद् ब्रह्मसमन्विते ब्रह्मैव भवतीत्यर्थः” ।

conscious of our simple nature, we have become so complex, so artificial, so diplomatic and so mixed up with delusion and error and right discrimination—everything is mixed up. In this state it is very difficult to understand correctly, to separate spirit from matter and matter from spirit; to separate the ego from non-ego; to separate the Absolute from the relative, and we are living in that state now, so how can we expect to reach the Absolute right away? *We must simplify our own nature, purify our hearts, remove all the knots of desires and passions and earthly ambition.* To think that I am this body is one knot; I am this, I am that, I am thin, I am fat, I am dark, I am white, I am beautiful, I am ugly—these are all knots. These are not helpful to the path of realization. The soul must not have such ideas. These are all delusions. The soul is bodyless entirely. It has no body, still it makes mistakes and thinks of itself as one with the body. It thinks through mistake that I am a child; I am a grown up man; I have grey hair; I have black hair. All these are delusions, and these delusions should cease to disturb the ego. The self-deluded ego thinks that this is my property, this is my wealth, I want to accumulate more wealth; I want to gain this. These are all false knowledge. The soul or true Self never does these things; some ghost has entered into our being and has taken possession of our heart and is guiding us in this way; is forcing us to commit such blunders, and if we can once come out of the influence of this demon then we are safe, then we

start right up like a rocket and enter into the realm of infinite Reality.

The notions or conceptions: I am happy, I am unhappy, I am this, I am that—are all knots. These knots must be torn asunder. We should realize that we are Spirits, children of immortal Bliss, we cannot have such thoughts and ideas, we cannot have any passions. Why should we take care of these physical and material bodies? There are some people who are crazy to take care of their bodies, putting little things here and there—simply for what purpose? To satisfy their minds and desires that they are one with the body, and by taking care of the bodies they are taking care of their souls. But that is not a correct way, because by doing that they are simply encouraging blunders. Of course, by this I do not mean that we should neglect our bodies, but we should not make much of them. We should consider the body as an instrument. The soul has taken this body to fulfil a certain purpose and that is all. It is not the primary thing, but it is secondary. Really the material body is the instrument of the soul, and we must not listen to those teachers who simply keep our minds within the limits of the physical plane and use all methods how to beautify the body, how to make it strong, and this and that. These physical methods are only temporary. They are always contingent. They proceed from *ignorance of the true Self—ignorance of the Truth that we are souls and not bodies*. Bodies are frail and they should be looked upon only as instruments or

means as I have said before. Some people think that perfect health is the sign of high spirituality. They are mistaken just the same. But it is true, also, that a soul which has understood the laws of life and who is obeying the hygienic laws and other laws of life correctly will have good health. Now, sometimes we may do all these things correctly, still we may have ill health; and the cause of it is that we are reaping the result of our previous mistakes, and that is all. What we committed in the past must produce results, and, therefore, we are suffering. When a wise man suffers from ill health we must not find fault with him. He is reaping the result of his previous mistakes now. The mistakes you committed 10 or 20 years ago will not cease to produce their results, and those results will come back upon you after 20, 30, 40 years—some in the next reincarnation. There is no way of stopping it. When the bullet is shot it must go to its destination. You cannot stop it. But so long as the bullet is within our powers, is not shot, we can check its course. But when it is once shot it cannot be checked, it must take its own course. So all the works which we have done through mistakes and all the evil thoughts we have thought out will produce their evil results. They are shot, and they cease only by producing the results. So we should face them bravely and accept everything that comes before us. We are the cause of all these things that are happening to us. We must take them bravely, manfully, and learn the result so as not to commit

the same error once again. So, when all these knots of the heart are removed, are torn asunder, are cut away, destroyed by the fire of wisdom, or right knowledge and right discrimination, then the soul becomes immortal. This is the teaching of the Ruler of Death (Yama). He describes that *the moment one realizes this, the moment one has transcended all these mental and physical conditions, that very moment that soul has become perfect and immortal even in this life*, and by that he has answered the question which the young seeker after Truth asked: How far the realm of death does extend and who can become immortal. But those who cannot reach that state in this life, but perform good thoughts and good deeds and gradually, by the slow process of evolution, march onward—what will become of them? They will enter into the realm of immortality sooner or later, and no one will be lost, but each individual soul will gradually become conscious of its immortal nature.

There are various methods of Yoga that are described, and here the Ruler of Death says that those who cannot reach that state of consciousness right away, through practice can attain to it and become immortal.

Now, he describes the method of Râja Yoga, and says, that there are various nerves in the system. Among all these hundreds of nerves and arteries and veins there is one which goes through the brain, upward. That one is called *shushumnâ*. It goes through the spinal column through the

medulla oblongata, through the brain upward, and that one is the path of *Brahman*; that one leads to the highest heaven as the Yogis conceive. Anyone who can enter that nerve and at the time of death pass out through that nerve, through the middle of the brain can attain to the *Brahman*, the highest heaven of the Creator, and *there he goes on in his spiritual progress and ultimately reaches the consciousness of the Absolute*.<sup>8</sup> All other nerves and other doors are for reincarnation.<sup>9</sup> If we cannot

8. Here the Swâmi's philosophical non-dualistic (*Advaitic*) standpoint is clear. He says that through the method of Yoga a Yogi "*can attain to the Brahman, the highest heaven of the Creator*". In truth, his marching is not stopped there, but "*from there he goes in his spiritual progress and ultimately reaches the consciousness of the Absolute*". The Swâmi clearly discriminates the two spiritual methods, *Yogic* and *Advaitic*. By Yogic practice one can commune with the ever-effulgent Parama-Siva seated on the thousand petalled lotus (*sahasrârachakra*) passing gradually through the *susumna* canal, but that communion does not mean the highest realization of the transcendental *Brahman*. And so from there his spiritual progress again begins to reach the highest point, from there he rises again and enters into the realm of the absolute *Brahman* as described by the Advaita Vedânta.

६। यतश्चैका च हृदयस्य नाड्य,

स्तासां मूर्धानमभिनिःसृतैका ।

तयोर्द्वयायामृतत्वमेति,

विष्वङ्कन्या उत्क्रमणे भवन्ति ॥

Sankara says also: "आद्यतो वा सह कालन्तरेण मुख्यममृतत्वमेति

—भुक्त्वा भोगाननुपमान् ब्रह्मलोकगतान् \* \* \* ।"

It should be noticed that the text of the Upanishad



enter into that *shushumnâ* path we will have to remain in the realm of creation, and therefore, the Yogis try to awaken that *shushumnâ* and enter into that path. They draw the breath here (*âjñâ-chakra*), between the eyebrows. At the time of death they withdraw the whole mind from the lower part of the body. All consciousness they withdraw from every organ and concentrate it here, and then gradually let it go upward and pass out. They pass out through the *shushumnâ*. Those who are practising Râja Yoga will be able to understand how it can be done, but those who have not advanced far enough will not be able to understand it.

In "Râja Yoga" or *Pâtanjaladarsana* all these are described. But this is the earliest expression of that practice. Even in the

this connection is '*utkramena bhavanti*'. Sankara comments upon this word as "विष्वक् नाना-विधास्तयः अन्या नाढ्य उपक्रमेण उत्क्रमणिमिष्य भवन्ति, संसार-प्रतिपत्त्यर्था एव भवन्तीत्यर्थः । 'उत्क्रमण' means 'coming back' or 'passing to other *lokas* or regions'. In fact, there happens nothing like *vyutthâna* or the process of 'coming back' or 'going beyond' of the realized souls. The Swâmi discussed it also in his book *Our Relation to the Absolute* (p. 196) by saying: "And truly speaking, there is no longer any *going beyond* the Absolute, or *going down* or *coming back* (*vyutthâna*) from the Absolute by one who has realized it: '*Na sa punarâvartate*'."

Vedas that practice was advocated from very ancient times. You see how they knew the physiology and anatomy, and how they discovered this centuries and centuries before Christ and they practised it. They could withdraw their whole consciousness from every organ and make those organs stop and then enter into the highest realm of consciousness. The whole organic system will obey the will-power of such a Yogi, and there are Yogis in India today who have absolute control over every part of the body. It can be done. I have seen such Yogis who can do that and who have succeeded in withdrawing consciousness from every part of the body at their will. It is not at all an abnormal state, because the Yogis are absolutely sane persons getting the highest wisdom and living on the highest plane, they are absolutely moral and spiritual, and keen in perception and intellect. They can do these things, they can bring their consciousness, bring all the organs and senses under their control. By practising this Yoga they know how to die, they know what will happen after death if they pass out through some particular nerve or particular sense organ, they know exactly, and they know also how to stop that. That power is greater than any other power like clairvoyance and clairsaudience. But those are abnormal conditions—seeing at a distance or hearing sounds. So gain perfect control over yourself, bring every inch of your body under your control. That is the thing we should try to acquire, and then enter into the realm of the Absolute, of Immortality,

through that nerve which goes through the middle of the brain.

The true Self is very small, is very minute, but it dwells in the hearts of all living creatures. It is very subtle. It is confined or hidden under different layers, or different planes of existence. First is the gross physical plane—the physical body; then the sense plane—the sense powers; then the mental plane, emotional plane, intellectual plane. All these planes: the planes of happiness, pleasure, joy, etc., are all coverings (*Pancha-Kosha*) too. Now, all these planes hide, and cover the Absolute, the true Self. And as one can take out the pith of a reed by drawing it out from its shell or covering, so one should try to draw out the true Self which is hidden under these sheathes of different layers of existence or *Prâna*, and when one has learned that method, the essence of the being can be realized.<sup>10</sup>

This can be learned from a Master who has attained the Divine illumination. The books can go so far as to say what should be done (*'jñâpakam hi sâstram'*) but they cannot reveal the Truth. We shall have to learn it from a living teacher, Guru or

१०।

अङ्ग उमात्रः पुरुषोऽन्तरात्मा

सदा जनानां हृदये सन्निविष्टः ।

तं स्वाच्छरीरात् प्रवृहेन्मुखादिवेशीकां वैशेष्य ।

तं विद्याच्छुक्रममृतं तं विद्याच्छुक्रममृतमिति ॥

—Katha-Upanishad, 2. 3. 17.

Sankara says as regards it: “तं शरीराज्जिह्वुद विद्यानं विद्यात् विद्यानीयात्—शुक्रं शुक्रम् अमृतं यथोक्तं ज्ञप्तेति ।

spiritual master, because we are too gross, and our minds are too much on the material plane, on the sense plane, so we cannot understand how this could be done. In the first place, we have no faith in ourselves—we have no self-confidence. We do not believe that there is such a thing as immortal Soul. We do not believe that we are the Soul or *Atman*, that we are children of immortal Bliss. These beliefs should come first. It may take a long time—many generations—many incarnations before we can acquire them. Blessed are they who have attained to such conviction, such faith in themselves, not faith in any outside thing, but the first thing should be faith in our own self—that we exist—that we are souls—that we are Spirits—that we are beyond all these material conditions—that we are children of immortal Bliss, then start on to realize our true Self. And even then we will be misled. The attractions and temptations of the world are so great that they will drag us again and again on these planes, and we will have to fight hard to conquer our own minds; just as Buddha had to fight hard for six long years after he had renounced everything. He had to fight hard, and then he succeeded. *It is not an easy thing, but yet there is nothing greater than this.* This is the greatest. Do not try to conquer other nations; do not try to conquer your competitors. These competitors do not amount to anything. But conquer your competitor within yourself who is dragging you down to the material plane and keeping you enchained within the realm of phenomena. Find

that out. That conquest is the best. *The conqueror of the mind is greater than the conqueror of the world; the conqueror of ambition is greater, is divine while the conqueror of the world is a slave of ambition. The one is free, the other is a slave. The one attains to the highest immortal Bliss, the other suffers from the reaction and loses everything in the end, as Napoleon did.*

So millionaires and multi-millionaires do not amount to anything. All those big millionaires who founded the city of San Francisco lost everything, lost all their beautiful palaces, and everything, they could not protect them.<sup>11</sup> So it is useless to hold wealth and to be vain about it, to boast that I possess so much, what do I care for the rest of the world. That boasting is nothing, that shows the ignorance of the individual and it is foolishness. The wise man laughs at it. Those who are trying to acquire more wealth, the wise man also laughs at them because they are chasing the phantoms of hope which never come twice, and even when they do come do not make them happy. Why do we keep our eyes closed? Let us be brave. Let us not be like an ostrich. When an ostrich is frightened he buries his head in the sand, he does not want to see anything. Why should we go into that state? That is not healthy. Let us wake up and see things as they are in reality and face the brute and find out the ways by which we can get out of this condition. Why should we waste our

11. This was delivered after the great earthquake in San Francisco.

time and energy by doing petty things? They do not amount to anything.

That which is the pith, the essence of our being, remember that, that is pure and perfect and immortal. Know that to be immortal—yea that is immortal. There is nothing beyond it. The essence of our soul is immortal, and that can never die.

Here ends the teaching of the Ruler of Death.

Hearing this wonderful teaching, taking regardfully the instruction from the Ruler of Death, the young seeker after Truth attained to the consciousness of his immortal Self. He realized the immortal Self, transcended the realm of thoughts and entered into the superconscious realization, and through the practice of that Yoga he gained full Godconsciousness, became pure and perfect, became free from change, free from death and eternally blissful. Whosoever will follow his path will attain to the same goal. Whosoever will realize the Absolute as eternal within his heart will become immortal in the end and will transcend the realm of Death (Yama).

१२ । मृत्युं प्रोक्तां नाचकेतोऽथ लब्ध्वा  
विद्यामेतां योगविधिना कृतस्मम् ।

ब्रह्मप्राप्तो विरजोऽभूद्विमृत्यु  
रनेद्यज्येव यो विदध्यात्ममेव ॥

—Katha-Upanishad, 2. 3. 18.

To conclude the story this last verse has been mentioned—“विद्यास्तुत्यर्थोऽयम्याख्यायिकार्योपसंहारः अमुनोच्यते \* \* योगविधिना कृतस्मं लब्ध्वा सोपकरं सकलमित्येतत् \* \* ।”

ॐ सह नावतु । सह नौ भुनक्तु । सह वीर्यं कर्षावहे । तेजस्विना-  
वधीतमस्तु मा विद्विषावहे । ॐ कान्तिः कान्तिः कान्तिः ।

May that which we have studied in these chapters be a food to our souls; may it enlighten our minds and strengthen our bodies; may it bring peace and happiness in our souls; may there be peace between the teacher and the students; may we not quarrel or find fault with each other. *Peace, Peace, Peace be unto us all.* It is the end.









